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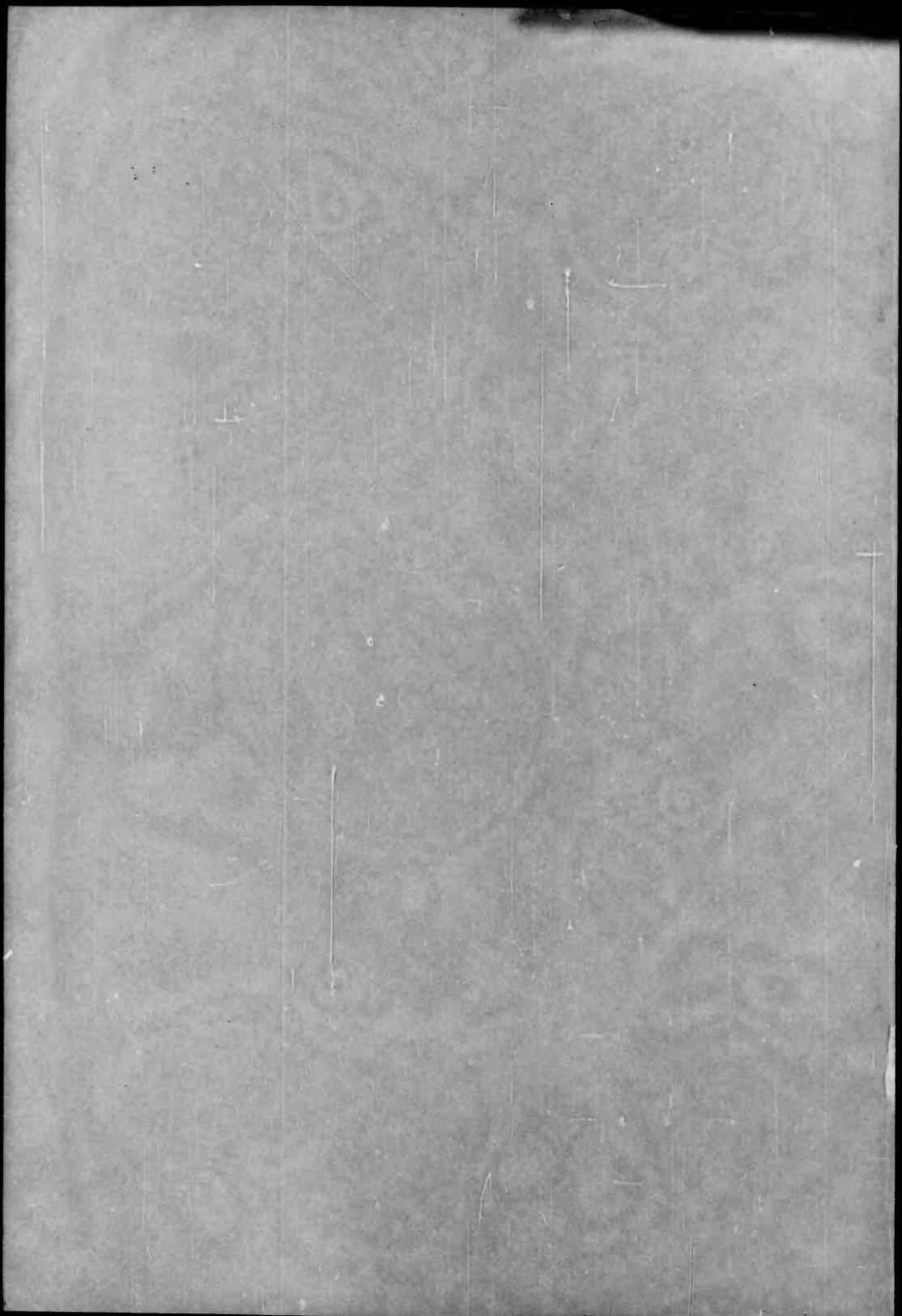
# THE ROMANIC REVIEW

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# THE ROMANIC REVIEW

## A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

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## DANTE'S CONCEPTION OF POETIC EXPRESSION

By Joseph Anthony Mazzeo

STUDENTS of Dante interested in his views of poetic expression and structure have naturally focused their attention mainly on what he has to say about allegory. He describes both his major work and several of his *Canzoni* as allegorical in structure and evidently thought of allegorical theories as providing both an essential description of the nature of poetry and a most important instrument for its interpretation.

Dante discussed allegory in two places: first in the *Convivio* (II, i), before beginning the *Comedy*, and much later, while at work on the *Paradiso*, in the letter to Can Grande della Scala (7 & 8). Dante's commentators, however, frequently cite or refer to these passages generally, without taking note of the differences between them. Only two attempts, to my knowledge, have been made to explore these differences and arrive at some understanding of their significance: C. S. Singleton's "Dante's allegory" and Bruno Nardi's studies in *Nel mondo di Dante*.<sup>1</sup>

The problem which arises in confronting these two texts is that, in the *Convivio*, Dante distinguished allegory as used by poets from allegory as understood by theologians, while in the letter to Can Grande he referred exclusively to the allegory of theologians as a key to the interpretation of his great poem claiming, in effect, that it is to be read in the same manner as Scripture. In the light of the generally accepted medieval theories of poetic and theological allegory, the difference between these two passages is of great significance. To claim to use the allegory of theologians is to remove the *Divine Comedy* from the category of poetry as his contemporaries understood it.

Although their conclusions are quite different both Nardi and Singleton have made valuable contributions to the solution of this problem. Some of the difficulties they raise, however, can best be solved by placing the study of allegory in the larger context of the problem of metaphor, the *genus* of which allegory, defined as an extended metaphor, was but a *species*. I would like first to consider these crucial texts in the light of both medieval theories of allegory and modern criticism and then pass on to a discussion of Dante's conception of metaphor and its possible relation to the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

1. C. S. Singleton, "Dante's Allegory," *Speculum*, XXV (1950), 78-86 (reprinted in his *Dante Studies I: Commedia. Elements of Structure* [Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1954]); Bruno Nardi, "Le Figurazioni allegoriche e l'allegoria della 'donna gentile'" and "I Sensi delle Scritture" in his *Nel mondo di Dante* (Roma: Edizioni di "Storia e Letteratura," 1944), pp. 23-40, 55-61. See also Nardi's "Dante profeta," in his *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari: Laterza, 1949), pp. 336-416, esp. pp. 375 ff. For medieval discussions of allegory and modern studies on Dante's view see *Il Convivio*, ed. G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli. 2nd ed. (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1954), I, 240-42.

Dante tells us in the *Convivio* that his poems had been misunderstood because they had been read only on the literal and not on the allegorical level. It was therefore incumbent upon him to explain how his *Canzoni* were properly to be read; it is in this context that he proceeds to discuss allegory:

I say that, as was told in the first chapter, this exposition must be both literal and allegorical; and that this may be understood it should be known that writings may be taken and should be expounded chiefly in four senses. The first is called the literal, and it is the one that extends no further than the letter as it stands; the second is called the allegorical, and is the one that hides itself under the mantle of these tales, and is a truth hidden under beauteous fiction. As when Ovid says that Orpheus with his lyre made wild beasts tame and made trees and rocks approach him; which would say that the wise man with the instrument of his voice makes cruel hearts tender and humble; and moveth to his will such as have [not] the life of science and of art; for they that have not the rational life are as good as stones. And why this way of hiding was devised by the sages will be shown in the last treatise but one. It is true that the theologians take this sense otherwise than the poets do, but since it is my purpose here to follow the method of the poets I shall take the allegorical sense after the use of the poets.

The third sense is called moral, and this is the one that lecturers should go intently noting throughout the scriptures for their own behoof and that of their disciples. Thus we may note in the Gospel, when Christ ascended the mountain for the transfiguration, that of the twelve apostles he took with him but three; wherein the moral may be understood that in the most secret things we should have but few companions.

The fourth sense is called the anagogical, that is to say "above the sense": and this is when a scripture is spiritually expounded which even in the literal sense, by the very things it signifies, signifies again some portion of the supernal things of eternal glory; as may be seen in that song of the prophet which saith that when the people of Israel came out of Egypt, Judea was made holy and free. Which although it be manifestly true according to the letter is none the less true in its spiritual intention; to wit, that when the soul goeth forth out of sin, it is made holy and free in its power.<sup>2</sup>

In the first paragraph of this passage Dante tells us that all writings, sacred and profane, can be read in four senses and proceeds to discuss the first two of these senses. The first is the literal sense and is simply the primary meaning of the words of the passage as they stand. The second sense is allegorical and is the truth hidden under the "beauteous fiction" of the words as they stand, the literal meaning. Dante then gives an example from Ovid and adds that theologians take the *allegorical* sense in a way that is different from that of the poets. I wish here to stress that it is only of the allegorical sense that Dante distinguishes between the allegory of poets and that of theologians. Are we then to assume that he thought that the literal sense of Ovid and of Holy Scripture had the same sort of status?

2. *Convivio*, II, i, 2-9, trans. Phillip H. Wicksteed (London: Dent, 1903), pp. 63-64.

Of course not. All that Dante means here, although he does not distinguish it for us, is that the literal sense of any text is what that text apparently says, whether it is literally true, in our modern sense of this term, or figurative.

Part of the difficulty in interpreting medieval discussions of allegory derives from our tendency to define *litteralis* as "literal," when all it means is the sense of a text as such, whether it be a fiction or a literal truth. Dante is not saying that theologians do not take Scripture to be a "beauteous fiction," for this would have been in his view too obvious to mention.<sup>3</sup> He is calling our attention, as Busnelli and Vandelli observe, to an important distinction between the allegorical sense of Scripture and the allegorical sense of a poet like Ovid.<sup>4</sup> The primary meaning of Scripture, whether expressed in plain and literal, or in metaphorical terms, conveys truths given to the scribe by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Even when the scribe gives God human attributes he is not writing allegory but simply using a metaphor to describe a divine attribute. Whatever other senses a passage may have are of secondary intention, superimposed upon the primary meaning whether that primary meaning is a parable, a metaphor, or an historical event.

The poet on the other hand, according to this view, starts with a truth and then proceeds to envelop this truth in a beautiful fiction so that, for him, the allegory is his primary intention, while the literal sense is secondary. The literal sense of Scripture, however, is primary even when the higher senses are "built in," so to speak, and are fully intended.

In the second paragraph of this passage he discusses briefly the third sense, the moral meaning, and refers only to a passage from Scripture. There is no talk of poets at all, and the reference to Ovid is not pursued further, for very good reasons as we shall see. The third paragraph takes up the anagogical sense and again the reference is only to Holy Scripture. In accordance with the standard interpretation of this meaning, Dante points out that the things in Scripture which the words signify may in turn signify other, eternal, things. This is so because God has the power of using both words and things to signify what he wishes to make known. Thus the literal meaning of a passage may, by the realities it signifies, refer through those realities to other realities of an eternal order.

As Bruno Nardi pointed out, Dante's analysis is confused.<sup>5</sup> The medieval grammarians distinguished only two senses in profane writing, the literal and allegorical. This was the allegory of poets.<sup>6</sup> The theologians distin-

3. Wicksteed, op. cit., p. 67 n. feels that in spite of what Dante actually says, he is distinguishing between the two allegories primarily by the difference from the literal sense.

4. *Il Convivio*, ed. Busnelli and Vandelli, pp. 241-42.

5. *Nel mondo di Dante*, pp. 55-61.

6. On allegory and related subjects in the middle ages, Edgar De Bruyne's work supersedes all others. I have drawn heavily on his *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*.

guished four senses, and it was only Sacred Scripture that could have four senses. Dante does not pursue the example from Ovid through all four levels because according to the teachings of the authorities, no profane writer could have all four levels of meaning. The schools distinguished two kinds of allegory, the kind possible to human beings alone and the kind possible to God alone. The former is always made up of words; it is always tied to the *sensus litteralis*, i.e. it conveys its meanings through words whether the narrative these words constitute is literal, in the modern sense, or figurative. The literal sense may also enclose some hidden meaning and this is the allegorical sense, the teaching beneath the veil.

There is a kind of allegory, however, which only God can make: when things or realities (*res*) stand for other things or realities. Any *res* is a *signum*

(Bruges: "De Tempel," 1946), I, 339 ff.; II, 302 ff. The allegorical scheme of the theologians was first worked out by Cassian, *Collationes*, XIV, 8 (PL, XLIX, cols. 962B-65B). He uses *sensus tropologicus* instead of *sensus moralis* for the second meaning of a text, a meaning which applies to human character. His *sensus allegoricus* is also called *mysticus* and is the third sense, *not* the second, referring to prophecies in the Old Testament. An elaborate allegorical or "mystical" reading of the book of nature, with the realities of nature taken as a system of divine symbols, was developed early in Rhabanus Maurus' *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam* (PL, CXII, cols. 849ff.) This conception, in simpler form, is the basis of Cassian's fourth—anagogical—sense, in which realities refer to eternal truths. But between Cassian and Rhabanus "allegorical" and "mystical" shifted their reference from prophetic truths in Scripture to the transcendental meanings of things and events in Scripture and nature.

Karl Vossler pointed out that religious texts were interpreted primarily in the anagogical sense, history in the moral sense, and poetry in its allegorical or conceptual meaning. A relatively late development in allegorical theory, this indicates a further shift in the reference and meaning of the word "allegorical." It refers in this scheme to the second sense. Vossler, however, does not make the traditional distinctions between allegorical interpretations of sacred and profane texts. Profane texts could have only one other level besides the literal whether that level revealed moral or conceptual truths (*Die göttliche Komödie* [Heidelberg: Winter, 1925], I, 143).

The question of allegory is complex and confusing because allegory served a variety of purposes. In reference to Scripture and the writings of the pagans, the allegorical method was used to save the morality of parts of certain works or to adapt primitive and naive elements of religious tradition for more sophisticated minds. This mode of allegory seems to have begun when Theagenes (sixth cent. B.C.), moved by piety, allegorized Homer in order to make his gods acceptable to a different religious consciousness. Philo applied the same technique for this, as well as for philosophical reasons, to the Old Testament. The method later became popular among the Alexandrian fathers.

But there is a great difference between the kind of allegorizing which derives from the ethical or philosophic impulse, the kind that emerges when rationalism and morality confront the creations of the poetic consciousness, and the allegorizing of nature and history made possible by Christian metaphysics. The providence of a personal God who ruled the universe gave new meaning to events in the universal plan, and the analogical relationship which Christian thought came to posit between the Creator and the creature formed the basis of a metaphysics of allegory wherein the created world was conceived as an image of the Creator. Of course, these conceptions of allegory were all interfused, so that the impulse to save the morality of sacred and profane writings was present even when interpreters worked within the framework of the metaphysics of allegory.

because God made things so that they would also be meanings.<sup>7</sup> Thus we can read the book of creatures and of history. The Bible combines both kinds of "discourse." It, like profane literature, uses words to indicate things, directly or indirectly, i.e. literally or figuratively. But it also uses realities (*res*), things and events, to express other realities of the spiritual and moral order. In the order of verbal expression the Bible has both history and parable, the latter not necessarily historically true but morally true, a pedagogic device for teaching the truth. On the level of signification through things, Scripture describes events and individuals which are types or analogies of spiritual and moral realities. Their significance is not man-made but is "built into" the realities by their Creator. No human writing could have more than the literal sense, the meaning conveyed through the words, and the allegorical sense, the abstract teaching the narrative might enclose. The mystical or spiritual senses do not, strictly speaking, derive from the words or narrative, the *sensus litteralis*, but from the fact that the things and events the words describe are themselves ordered to signify truths of faith in the Christian life or salvation in eternity. This is possible only to God, for only He can order historical events so as to yield a meaning or to refer to a timeless and transcendental reality. Only God can make things and events be signs and speak through nature and history.

The allegory of theologians is strictly a method of interpretation of God's "writing" while the allegory of poets is both a method of interpretation and a principle of construction. Man can write and interpret a two-fold allegory, while only God can write the four-fold allegory of theologians, although man can interpret His "writings" by understanding their principle of construction. In the *Convivio* Dante undoubtedly confused these two allegories. The assumption that both kinds had four senses, the failure to follow through the example from Ovid, his lack of awareness of the metaphysical and theological presuppositions of the anagogical sense, and his generally inconsistent treatment of the question indicate that Dante assumed the structural identity of both kinds of allegory.

Yet in his mature statement of the question Dante simplified and clarified the problem; not by distinguishing more clearly between the allegory of poets and theologians but by surpassing all reference to an allegory of poets. This would imply that Dante believed himself able to confer on things and events those meanings which presumably could only come from God. Neither Dante nor any sane contemporary would have maintained this. On the other hand, it would not be absurd to claim that a man inspired with the spirit of prophecy and poetry could discover the meaning of things and events, could use and manipulate God's language, read God's books and

7. De Bruyne, op. cit., II, 310 ff., and Joseph A. Mazzeo, "Universal Analogy and the Culture of the Renaissance," *JHI*, XV (1954), 299-304, 302.

fuse elements therefrom into a book of his own. I believe that Dante was saying something of this kind in the letter to Can Grande, but before discussing the interpretations of this change in his theory of allegory let us consider the passage itself:

For the elucidation, therefore, of what we have to say, it must be understood that the meaning of this work is not of one kind only; rather the work may be described as 'polysemous,' that is, having several meanings; for the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next is that which is conveyed by what the letter signifies; the former of which is called literal, while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical. And for the better illustration of this method of exposition we may apply it to the following verses: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.' For if we consider the letter alone, the thing signified to us is the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses; if the allegory, our redemption through Christ is signified; if the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified; and if the anagogical, the passing of the sanctified soul from the bondage of the corruption of this world to the liberty of everlasting glory is signified. And although these mystical meanings are called by various names, they may one and all in a general sense be termed allegorical, inasmuch as they are different (*diversi*) from the literal or historical; for the word 'allegory' is so called from the Greek *alleon*, which in Latin is *alienum* (strange) or *diversum* (different).

This being understood, it is clear that the subject, with regard to which the alternative meanings are brought into play, must be twofold. And therefore the subject of this work must be considered in the first place from the point of view of the literal meaning, and next from that of the allegorical interpretation. The subject, then, of the whole work, taken in the literal sense only, is the state of souls after death, pure and simple. For on and about that the argument of the whole work turns. If, however, the work be regarded from the allegorical point of view, the subject is man according as by his merits or demerits in the exercise of his free will he is deserving of reward or punishment by justice.<sup>8</sup>

For Bruno Nardi, the statement of allegory in the letter to Can Grande della Scala is also confused. Dante still does not, in Nardi's view, understand the impossibility of any human being's writing an allegory of theologians and, far from clarifying the question, he compounds his own confusion by assuming that his poem is written in such an allegory. Nardi also observes that what Dante defines as the literal meaning, the state of souls after death, is exactly the same as what he defines as the allegorical meaning, man by his merits and demerits through free choice deserving the reward or punishment of divine justice, for this is precisely what constitutes their state. He concludes that we ought to ignore Dante's claim of using the allegory of theologians.<sup>9</sup>

8. *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae. The Letters of Dante*, trans. and ed. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), Ep. X, 7 and 8, 134ff. All citations of this letter are in this translation.

9. Op. cit., pp. 60-61.

Nardi, however, does not take account of Dante's *intention* in claiming to use the allegory of theologians, whether or not he understood the careful distinctions of the schools. After all, it frequently happens that to express a new idea or make a new claim one must use an old vocabulary or set it in an old framework. The schema of the schools and many of the distinctions they made strike us as artificial and arbitrary. Modern philosophers of language would not make such a sharp distinction between the plain and figurative, the literal and the metaphorical and some of them have defined everyday literal language as nothing but the depository of dead metaphor.

Dante's intention in "misapplying" or "confusing" the linguistic theories of the schools is to call attention to the *truth* of his poem, to remove it from the category of fiction as the grammarians understood that term. If we consider the *Divine Comedy* and the *Vita Nuova* as forms of spiritual autobiography, we can understand one possible way in which Dante can claim to use the higher senses which only God can give to men and events. God's providence governed the events of his life as He governed the events of both sacred and secular history. This is true not only for Dante but for everyman. A man looking back over his past may discover what his experiences and actions meant and will discover that some of them—perhaps trivial or unintelligible when they occurred—will form a meaningful pattern and, taken together, reveal the particular and individual way that universal Wisdom proceeded in its government of the world.

But spiritual autobiography must be distinguished from autobiography in the traditional sense, for it is made up of those events and those *alone* in which a man can discover the divine intention and meaning. Dante himself tells us that it is improper for a man to speak of himself merely for the sake of doing just that and nothing more. If everything that is and happens has a meaning, it is not for man to know it. Only those events in which there is, and in which he can discern, a higher meaning are fit for disclosure. These are the events which Dante abstracted from the flow of merely empirical autobiography and reset in the framework of a fiction. If, as Nardi holds, Dante confused the two theories of allegory, he did so because neither explained the true status of his poem. It is on the one hand fiction because the journey never happened; it is on the other hand truth because the elements of the poem, cosmological, ethical, and personal are true. One of Dante's intentions, in discussing allegory, is not so much to advance a theory of explication as to describe a theory of the *selection and ordering of significant experience*. It is thus that the meaningful intellectual and personal experience of a lifetime is compressed into the "time" of one week. What is truly fiction in the poem is what is necessary to connect significant events and ideas after they have been abstracted from the flow of empirical reality, from the flow of events through time and space.

Charles S. Singleton, in his article on Dante's allegory and in his studies on the underlying structural principles of both the *Vita Nuova* and the

*Comedy*, has taken seriously Dante's claim of using the allegory of theologians. He maintains that the *Divine Comedy* is written in the allegory of theologians and that, accordingly, it is an allegory of "this and that" not of "this for that." Thus Virgil, an historical figure, has full-blooded existence in the poem; his actions are not fictions designed to convey hidden meanings, but have the status of events. This, therefore, is an allegory of theologians because the literal level is not a fiction in the same way as the story of Orpheus.

Now while Dante intended his poem to have, as Mr. Singleton says, "a first meaning which is *in verbis* and another meaning which is *in facto*,"<sup>10</sup> this does not quite tell what Dante was up to in applying the allegory of theologians to his poem. Let us recall again the sharp distinction between profane or poetic allegory, human discourse in words enclosing an abstract meaning in the narrative they form, and sacred allegory, the spiritual sense of things and events in Scripture as well as the spiritual sense of the discourse of Scripture whether historical or parabolic. These spiritual senses are always of divine origin. In the distinction between the allegory of poets and that of theologians it was not primarily a question of the status of the *sensus litteralis*, of what might be signified *in verbis*. In either allegory this might be figurative and would be subject to the conventional forms of logical and rhetorical analysis.<sup>11</sup> Parts of scripture such as parables and the Canticles were always interpreted as figurative expressions of religious and moral truths. The real difference hinged on those higher senses in which the realities referred to by the words referred in turn to higher spiritual truths. These higher meanings, the meanings *in facto*, according to the theologians, are precisely what no human being could create. Yet Dante accepted as a principle of construction what could only be a principle of interpretation.

Dante does not claim to create reality; he is saying rather that he can see reality, at least in part, as God sees it. The poet inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love and Truth, receives through the imagination truths which cannot be otherwise known or stated. Of course Dante cannot claim to see all things or to confer on any thing or *res* the status of a *signum*. He can legitimately claim, however, that, by divine inspiration, he has been able to see the God-given transcendental meanings of many of the events of his life and time. If Dante erred in claiming to use the allegory of theologians—and by all the weight of authority he did err—we are a little closer to understanding the nature of his error and why he fell into it. He erred in assuming that the allegory of theologians as understood by the doctors of the Church was a principle of construction like the allegory of poets. He did not realize that the allegory of theologians was, in the view of the interpreters of Sacred Scripture, a principle of construction only for God, not man. On the other

10. Singleton, *Dante Studies I*, p. 91.

11. *Il Convivio*, ed. Busnelli and Vandelli, p. 241.

hand, he sensed in his own vision of things a penetration, the gift of divine inspiration, which permitted him to see things and events, as God intended them to be seen, with their eternal reference and meaning. Thus, with truth of this order in his poem it could only be read in some mode analogous to Scripture. Dante may not have understood the allegory of theologians as they wanted it understood, but he saw instinctively that it was this kind of allegory which best described the source and quality of his poem.

Mr. Singleton formulates the underlying presuppositions of Dante's structural imagination when he maintains that the *Divine Comedy*'s structure "imitates" that of reality as the great thinkers of the middle ages conceived it. As the universe may be considered the poem of God, so the poem is a kind of microcosm reflecting in its parts the nature of its model: "Allegory and symbolism are both given to this poet, as modes, out of the model which he had ever before him. They are, first of all [...] God's ways of writing. And analogy, in turn, is the comprehensive canon of art by which a medieval Christian poet could do his work as the realist he was."<sup>12</sup>

It is in this sense that the poet may imitate God's ways of writing even though he is, of course, unable to confer on actual things and events any transcendental meanings, i.e. make *signa* out of *res*. Rather, he discovers in things and events the meanings which their Creator gave them. Simply to have imitated God's allegory in any extrinsic way, however, would not have made Dante's allegory anything more than an allegory of poets. What Dante claims is prophetic inspiration and depth of vision, the power to read God's writing in his own experience and to fuse its elements into a coherent whole. His allegory is, in a sense, more than "so constructed as to be the image of God's allegory in His book of scripture, where events themselves are seen to point beyond to other events";<sup>13</sup> it is more than an image because the elements of the poem, cosmological, historical, personal, have those transcendent meanings which God gave and which Dante was able to discover. It is, however, an image in that these elements are set in the matrix of a fiction.

Dante's conception of allegory, however, remains ambiguous. Nardi is undoubtedly right in maintaining that Dante did not understand the allegory of theologians. It is true, at least, that he did not understand it as theologians wanted it understood. It is also true that he uses it to assert the

12. *Dante Studies I*, p. viii.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 61. Singleton distinguishes between allegory and symbolism: "symbolism is Dante's imitation of the structure of the real world, and allegory is his imitation of the structure of God's other book, Holy Scripture" (p. 29). This is a fruitful distinction, although in medieval usage, at least after the time of Rhabanus Maurus, *res* meant a reality whether a thing or event. Both the book of nature and the book of Scripture (and, by extension, of history) were allegorical. It does clarify the question, however, if we reserve the term symbol for the meaning which inheres in a thing or object considered more or less in isolation, and keep the term allegory—an extended metaphor or analogy—for an integrated series of symbols or events. It is confusing to refer to an event as symbolic since it is composed of a plurality of events extended in time.

importance of poetry and important conceptions about the nature of poetry and poetic expression. This will emerge more clearly from a consideration of his views on metaphor.

It is in terms of a theory of metaphor, which included allegory, that Dante stated most clearly his views on poetic truth and on the poet's rivalry with the theologian and philosopher in his claim to knowledge of ultimate reality. The most important reference to metaphor in Dante's works is in the letter to Can Grande. This letter, obviously an introduction to the *Paradiso* with general remarks on the nature of the poem and poetry, contains a discussion of the opening lines of the third cantica. This discussion makes the letter a treatise on light-metaphysics as well as a treatise on poetics. The fusion of poetics and light-metaphysics is not necessary simply because of the imagery and conceptions in the lines which Dante comments; it is necessary also because Dante treats metaphor in terms of light-metaphysics.

Light-metaphysics reduced all substantiality—God, souls, angels, things, the human intellect—to forms of light, uncreated and created, material and spiritual, sensible and intellectual.<sup>14</sup> It reduced the hierarchies of being, truth, beauty, perfection—indeed of all “value” to a hierarchy of light ascending to the very Primal Light itself, spiritual, uncreated, divine, the vision of which is the vision of all. This vision, even though Dante was not Aeneas or Paul, was yet given to him; but he cannot express it in its fullness, both because it is above the power of language to express and because he cannot recall all of it. Citing the authority of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor in his claim to direct vision of the highest reality,<sup>15</sup> he goes on to explain why language is inadequate for rendering the vision in its fullness:

He saw, then, as he says, certain things ‘which he who returns has neither knowledge nor power to relate.’ Now it must be carefully noted that he says ‘has neither knowledge nor power’—knowledge he has not, because he has forgotten; power he has not, because even if he remembers, and retains it thereafter, nevertheless speech fails him. For we perceive many things by the intellect for which language has no terms—a fact which Plato indicates plainly enough in his books by his employment of metaphors; for he perceived many things by the light of the intellect which his everyday language was inadequate to express.<sup>16</sup>

In this passage poetic theory and light-metaphysics are linked and metaphor is revaluated. In the doctrine of the schools poetic metaphor simply

14. For a discussion of light-metaphysics in relation to Dante's thought see Joseph A. Mazzeo, “Dante, the Poet of Love, Dante and the Phaedrus Tradition of Poetic Inspiration,” *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, IC, (1955), 133-45, 137-40.

15. See Edmund Gardner, *Dante and the Mystics*, (London: Dent, 1913), for the passages and doctrines referred to in the letter; ch. II on St. Augustine, ch. IV on St. Bernard and ch. V on Richard of St. Victor. On the impossibility of describing ultimate reality cf. *Paradiso* I, 4 and 70; XXIV, 19; XXXI, 137.

16. *Ep. X*, 29, 570 ff.

adorned and even obscured the truth, while theological metaphor, as found in Scripture, was the only way of expressing truths beyond human comprehension.<sup>17</sup> In citing the use of metaphor by Plato, a philosopher, Dante emphasizes that to express the ultimate reality, in itself inexpressible, even the thinker must resort to techniques which prevailing doctrine considered chiefly the property of poets. The poet-seer who journeys along the ladder of light to the Primal Light arrives at truths which only metaphor and allegory—the latter simply an extended metaphor—can express. In this way the poet is the rival and peer of the thinker. The Holy Spirit, in dictating Scripture to Its divinely inspired scribes, had, so to speak, used metaphors to accommodate supraterrestrial truths to terrestrial intellects. So too, the poet and thinker both may reach a realm of vision or thought, the content of which, when they "return," can be conveyed only symbolically. The implication is clear that there may be a plurality of symbolic and metaphorical expressions of those ineffable things which can be seen by the light of the intellect. Plato, after all, was no Christian and what he saw by the light of the intellect was not enough to keep him out of Limbo. But even certain truths of the natural or philosophical order are not to be stated literally.

The allusion to Plato is even more striking when compared to what St. Thomas has to say about him and his use of metaphor. In the commentary on the *De anima* of Aristotle, St. Thomas takes up the question of Aristotle's refutation of Plato, trying to extenuate Aristotle for criticizing Plato and, at the same time, justifying the criticism. He points out that, often, Aristotle criticizes not what Plato actually meant but the apparent meaning of his words. Aristotle had to do this because Plato's method of teaching was defective; for he constantly used symbols and figures of speech, as when he called the soul a circle, thereby obscuring by a figurative meaning his actual literal meaning. St. Thomas adds that when Plato called the soul a circle, he was only speaking metaphorically and did not mean that the soul was anything quantitative or circular, but—as St. Thomas repeats—lest there be any error Aristotle argues against the literal interpretation of the words.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the view in the letter to Can Grande, Plato uses metaphor as a pedagogical device—and a bad one it is for St. Thomas—not, as Dante infers, because what he has to say cannot be said in any other way.

St. Thomas also comments on Orpheus' erroneous opinion about the soul. He is coupled with Musaeus and Linus as a primitive poet-theologian who wrote in verse about philosophy and God. He was in error, immersed in the fictions of the imagination, but his eloquence helped civilize wild and bestial folk. St. Thomas would thus say that eloquence—metaphor, image, simile

17. See Mazzeo, "Dante, the Poet of Love," p. 138 n. 2 for references to the literature on this question.

18. S. Thomas Aquinas, *In Aristotelis librum De anima commentarium*, ed. P. F. A. M. Pirotta, 3rd ed. (Torino and Roma: Marietti, 1948), I. lectio VIII, nn. 107-08.

—may have a civilizing function, but he obviously agrees with Aristotle on the inadequacy of the poet-theologian.<sup>19</sup>

For Dante, however, poetry like philosophy gives truth. The poetry of a Christian who writes what Love or the Holy Spirit dictates gives Christian truth. A man, in a moment of mystic rapture, may have an inexpressible vision for which he must find some adequate expression. The Christian poet imitates the prophet inspired by God in accommodating a vision of saving truth to his readers "to remove those living in this life from a state of misery, and to bring them to a state of happiness." Thus, the branch of philosophy to which the *Comedy* is subject, "in the whole as in part, is that of morals or ethics; inasmuch as the whole as well as the part was conceived, not for speculation, but with a practical object."<sup>20</sup>

The metaphors of the Holy Spirit are those which God chose to express His truth, accommodating Himself to a human comprehension in order to lead it to the pure truth. The seer and philosopher, granted a vision of the truth, must do likewise. Evidently, theological metaphor does not exhaust the meanings of the divine light that men can ascertain. Dante claims a personal revelation that is intensely individual and, at the same time, universal, for it is dictated by Love or the Holy Spirit Itself. The expression of this vision is a poem whose purpose, like that of Scripture, is to lead men to salvation. The poet is thus a prophet, expressing what he receives by divine inspiration. A true poem is nothing less than a supplement to Scripture.<sup>21</sup>

Theology, the light of revelation, must use metaphor to express that light; poetry and philosophy, expressions of the light of the intellect, also must use metaphor to express their light. All modes of discourse, in their various ways, constitute converging paths to the Primal Light itself. Poet, philosopher, theologian, prophet, and true lover meet on the road to the Absolute.

Thus both poetry and philosophy use metaphor to express truths which

19. *Ibid.*, I, lectio XII, n. 190.

20. *Ep.* X, 15, 267 ff. and 16, 271 ff.

21. On the patristic and scholastic attacks against poetry and Dante's defence see Nancy Lenkeith, "The Poet as Prophet," in her *Dante and the Legend of Rome* (Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. Richard Hund and Raymond Klibansky. Supplement II. London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952), pp. 33 ff. Miss Lenkeith points out that Dante applied to the poet concepts and formulas of theological prophecy like "dictation" and inspiration. Cf. Nardi, *Dante e la cultura*, pp. 336-416. St. Thomas, with his usual distrust of imagery, values prophecy accomplished solely through the intellect over prophecy accomplished by imagination or images (*De veritate*, arts. 12 and 13, esp. art. 12 ad 2). E. R. Curtius bases Dante's claim of rivaling philosophy entirely on sect. 271 of the letter to Can Grande in which he discusses the "modes" of treatment or the "form" of the poem. Curtius observes that five of the ten "modes" are poetic-rhetorical while five are philosophical. Dante's analysis of modes, however, is purely affirmative in character and neither explains why the poem gives truth nor defines its nature in terms of a general theory of linguistic expression (*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953], pp. 222-25, 480 ff.).

would be otherwise inexpressible. There is a considerable difference between this view and the conception in the *Convivio* of poetic metaphor as a beautiful lie embellishing a truth, sweetening some abstract moral idea. Between the *Convivio* and the letter to Can Grande, Dante had come to see that the fables of poets, their imaginative narratives, could have more than one kind of relationship to truth. The fiction of the supernatural journey in the *Comedy* is not a fiction in the same sense as the fictions about Orpheus, for example, in pagan poetry. It is rather what we would call a myth, a rendering in terms of time and space of the intuition of eternity. Time, as Plato said, is the moving image of eternity, but because it is a *moving* image, it is to some extent fictitious. Yet it is an image, a representation of an otherwise inexpressible reality. The visions which enter the imagination directly, without the medium of the senses, may have behind them the authority that lies behind the visions of Holy Writ. Love dictates them as it dictated to the prophets of old and the poet must render what the intellectual or divine light, formed in heaven, "either of itself or by a will which directs it downwards," gives it.<sup>22</sup> The *Paradiso* and indeed the whole of the *Divine Comedy* is a translation into terms of sensible light of a timeless vision of a spiritual or intellectual light; an adaptation for physical eyes of what was seen by the eyes of the soul.

Others before Dante had observed that Plato used metaphor and allegory to talk about philosophy, among them St. Thomas, who felt that such a figurative use of language was bad pedagogy. We find a more typical reaction to philosophic metaphor, however, in Abelard's *Introduction to Theology* where he says that Plato used figurative terms like *anima mundi* and *zōon* in the *Timaeus* to hide philosophic truth from the vulgar.<sup>23</sup> Yet this too is a negative, non-functional conception of metaphor.

The conception of metaphor and allegory in Dante's later works bears closest resemblance to some of the ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius, who had a profound effect on Dante and who may be a source in this matter. Dionysius distinguished two methods, *equally allegorical*, philosophical and theological, for coming to some knowledge of an ultimate reality which is beyond all predication.<sup>24</sup> These two methods actually constitute two theologies. One seeks to achieve clarity; its proper domain is the visible and it proceeds by demonstration. The other presupposes an initiation. It pro-

22. On medieval theories of dreams, prophecies and visions see Nardi, *Dante e la cultura*, pp. 295-301, 367 ff.; *Nel mondo di Dante*, pp. 73 ff. He points out that dreams in Dante's psychology often reveal in sensible signs and images truths which cannot be revealed by pure reason. Revelation through dreams and visions may come through the direct action of incorporeal agents such as God and the angels, or through corporeal agents such as heavenly bodies (e.g. *Convivio*, II, vii, 8-13). Thus in *Purgatorio* XVII, 13, the light that enters the "immaginativa" comes from the heavens themselves or through the volition of one who sends it down.

23. Peter Abelard, *Introductio ad theologiam*, I, 19, 1021C ff. Cf. 1022C and 1023B where he refers to Macrobius' use of metaphor for the same purpose.

24. Maurice de Gandillac, *Oeuvres complètes du pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite* (Paris: Aubier, 1943), Introduction, pp. 28-29.

ceeds by symbols and its proper domain is the *unutterable*.<sup>26</sup> Symbolism is a result of the necessary refraction of the invisible spiritual light through an imperfectly transparent medium. Thus philosophical and scriptural symbolism are closely related. One and the other use words to designate one single reality, in itself inexpressible and which includes in itself, at the same time, both affirmation and negation. For Dionysius only paradoxical terms can be used to describe the luminous and more than luminous darkness, which terms both *hide* and *reveal* the divine mysteries.<sup>27</sup>

The Light which diffracts itself through an imperfect medium and creates symbols of Itself is also Beauty and Good, while Love is the stimulus which drives every being through images toward perfect Beauty. In God, this love is the source of an infinite outpouring which leads Him to create the symbolic universe. Love also leads to ecstasies because it takes lovers out of themselves and transports them to higher realms. It makes superiors in the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies guide inferiors, it unites equals and makes inferiors strive to unite themselves with those orders above them which share more in the divine love.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear how, with some modification, reading "poet and philosopher" for philosopher and "poet-lover" for lover, we find here much of Dante's conception of the lover-poet and the value of poetry. All he had to do was affirm that all forms of discourse, poetic and philosophical, are equally metaphorical when it comes to the expression of eternity. The distinction between what the words convey and the allegorical meanings of the things they designate is, of course, still valid within this larger context. But what the words convey is in either case figurative and metaphorical because they refer to a timeless reality which cannot be apprehended directly or "literally."

In a striking passage of *Epistle IX*, Dionysius points out that those who have perceived theological doctrine clearly, without a veil, make for themselves some figure which aids them to *understand* what they have perceived.<sup>29</sup> The *Comedy* is offered to us, I believe, as just such a "figure," the result of vision in search of understanding.

25. Dionysius, *Ep. IX*, 1 (*PG*, III, col. 1105D).

26. Gandillac, op. cit., Introduction, pp. 31 and 35 n. 3; Dionysius, *Th. myst.* I, 1 (*PG*, III, col. 97B). The light which is Cacciaguida's smile (*Par. XVII*, 34) both hides and reveals him in a manner analogous to the operation of metaphor and symbolism in Dionysius' theory:

ma per chiare parole e con preciso  
latin rispuose quello amor paterno,  
chiuso e parvente del suo proprio rise:

Dionysius also held that another purpose of allegory is to protect sacred matter from profane consideration, a viewpoint deriving not from his speculations on the nature of expression but from the traditions of secret initiation.

27. Dionysius, *Div. no.* IV, 13 (*PG*, III, col. 712A).

28. *Ep. IX* (*PG*, III, col. 1108B).

A figure is of course a sensible image and Dionysius persistently maintains that figures not only help us understand what we have grasped of spiritual reality directly, but lead us to that reality.<sup>29</sup> The light which the sacred hierarchy imparts to the initiated and which leads them to immortality also diffracts into an imperfectly transparent medium creating symbols and figures of itself.<sup>30</sup> These symbols either help us to understand what we have already seen or lead us to an understanding of what we have never seen before and to a luminous, painless, immortality.<sup>31</sup>

This view of allegory is quite different from that of the schools of Dante's time, where literal and figurative expression, philosophical and theological allegory, were sharply distinguished and truth was considered the exclusive prerogative of literal statement. Dionysius studies allegory as part of the problem of metaphor and symbolism. As in the letter to Can Grande, all these questions of expression are answered ultimately in terms of light-metaphysics. We know that, between the writing of the *Convivio* and the letter to Can Grande, Dante had studied Dionysius. Since the particular blending of light-metaphysics, poetic theory and theology in the letter is paralleled only by Dionysius, it would seem that it was his conceptions of linguistic expression as rendering a luminous, imageless reality that helped Dante solve the problem of the nature of poetic expression.

Thus Dante puts poetic discourse or allegory, as given to a prophetically inspired Christian poet, on a par with the allegory of theologians, for they have the same source. Poetic allegory is on a par with all other forms of human discourse, and is equal to the highest, for in relation to what the Truth is in itself, no discourse is fully adequate. What love dictates to the poet and prophet, what the illuminated intellect of a philosopher or theologian can see, is more than language can express without recourse to metaphor and indirection.

In proclaiming his allegory equal to that of the theologians, Dante did not use the careful and precise analyses of the schools; he reformulated the question, after Dionysius, as the problem of metaphor and indirection in human expression of ultimate truth.

If Dante used things and events to signify spiritual and moral realities, it is because God gave them their significance. He merely *discovered*—through study and through dictation by the Holy Spirit—the God-created meaning of Beatrice, of the events of his life. He *learned* the meanings that God gave to natural objects like the sun when He created them. All that he learned about the significance of things he worked into his poem. The

29. *Coel. hier.* I (PG, III, col. 124A).

30. *Eccles. hier.* II, 3, 3 (PG, III, cols. 397D–400A); VII, 3, 5 (ibid., col. 560B).

31. Ibid. The Dionysian theory of symbolical and dialectical theology appears again in Tasso's *Discorsi del poema eroico*, Bk. II. He maintained that both mystical theologians and poets worked in the symbolic mode, a nobler one than the dialectical. Thus mystical theologians and poets have a higher form of expression than philosophers.

journey is a "literal" one—*litteralis* in the strictly medieval sense because the words describe a journey. It is, on the other hand, metaphorical in that the figurative journey renders an otherwise inexpressible vision. Dante, the poet, rivals the theologian because he has been able to discover God's meaning in things and events. He was able to do this by study and by the grace of Love. He rivals the philosopher because he had a vision of the truth by the light of the intellect which he, like the philosopher, could express only through metaphor. He rivals the prophet because the Holy Spirit, the flame of love, inspired him and dictated to him Its truth.

Dante's mature thought on the question of metaphorical expression, *eo nomine*, besides the important references in the letter to Can Grande, is found in the well-known passage in *Paradiso* in which he discusses the theory of accommodative metaphor to explain how the elect appear in the spheres while they "really" are in the empyrean:

These have shown themselves here, not that this sphere is allotted to them, but in sign of the heavenly rank that is least exalted. It is necessary to speak thus to your faculty, since only from sense perception does it grasp that which it then makes fit for the intellect. For this reason Scripture condescends to your capacity and attributes hands and feet to God, having another meaning, and Holy Church represents to you with human aspect Gabriel and Michael and the other who made Tobit whole again. What Timaeus argues about the souls is not like that which we see here; for what he says he seems to hold for truth. He says that the soul returns to its own star, from which he believes it to have been separated when nature gave it for a form; but perhaps his view is other than his words express and may have a meaning not to be despised. If he means the return to these wheels of the honour and the blame of their influence, his bow perhaps strikes on a certain truth. This principle, ill-understood, once misled almost the whole world, so that it went astray, naming them Jupiter and Mercury and Mars.<sup>32</sup>

Referring to the theory of accommodation in biblical metaphor and in Plato's *Timaeus*, Dante here explains how and why the blessed simply appear or manifest themselves in the planetary spheres; *but he tells us at the same time that this is what he is doing in his poem*. Dante, the character in the poem, is told that, although they are really elsewhere, the blessed appear to him in this way because he must have sensuous images to discern truth. The wayfarer has not yet acquired the new faculty which will permit the direct intuition of reality. At the same time Dante, the poet writing the poem, is telling how to understand the nature of his metaphor and refers—and this is most important and daring—to metaphor in Scripture and in Plato. As in the letter to Can Grande, he affirms that he has seen things by the light of the intellect which can only be described to us if at all—for Dante the poet is writing as one of us, a man once more in a natural condition—through metaphor, indirection, and myth. The "vos-

32. *Par.* IV, 37-63. The *Divine Comedy* is quoted in the trans. by John D. Sinclair, rev. ed. (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1948), 3 vols.

tro ingegno" of line 40 is a plural and refers to us all. We must recall, however, that Dante finally does see ultimate realities without anthropomorphic traits and that he sees the angels both in human shape and as luminous forms. In the theory of accommodative metaphor as applied to Scripture representations of divine things were deliberately crude so that they might reach even the simplest of men. It was the duty of the more intelligent to refine these images to find the truth they contained. Not all images of divinity, however, could be so conceptualized, for some truths were too high for the human intellect to render abstractly.

Thus, in this passage, Dante is at a lower level of consciousness, a level at which he is capable of penetrating the philosophical use of metaphor in the *Timaeus*, but not yet, as pilgrim, capable of seeing the blessed as they are. He finally sees them not only as they are but as they will be after the resurrection, in the possession of their glorified bodies. The images of the realities of the *Comedy* gradually correct themselves. The souls of the blessed from the sphere of Mercury on—after it increases in light—are hidden in their own light, and are finally seen in an eternal present in which they are as they will be.

The angels in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* appear in human form, but, later on, others appear as circles of light revolving around God seen as a point of infinite intensity and minuteness. But the Divine Mind—the point of light—is also the "place" of the *primum mobile* and "encloses" in its "immensity" the whole of the corporeal universe. The angels, the movers of the spheres, are also seen in two orders of arrangement. As circles of light, the highest rank of angels is manifested as the innermost one, the nearest to the central point of light which is God. As movers of the spheres, they are described so that the highest mover is the outermost from the center which is the earth. "Thus, by symbol, it is finally suggested that immaterial essence is beyond distinction of the great and small in magnitude; but even at the end the symbolism has not disappeared."<sup>33</sup>

There is another, more rapid and varied sequence of images which Dante experiences upon his acquisition of a new sense of sight.<sup>34</sup> In *Paradiso* XXX the first image is of a river of light, then the souls appear as beautiful flowers on the banks of the river with angels as sparks flitting about like bees. The river then becomes a sea of light and banks of tiers rise up around it—the elect as they will appear in their glorified bodies—and we see the rose whose "yellow" is the sea of light, the floor of the "arena" while the rose itself is white (*Par. XXXI, 1*).

The rose in turn undergoes transformations. It becomes successively a garden, a kingdom, an empire. As a flower it has two roots, but it also has

33. Thomas Whittaker, *The Neoplatonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p. 193.

34. See Mazzeo, "Dante, the Poet of Love," p. 35 for a discussion of this "new sight" (*novella vista*).

a stairway and keys. This whole sequence of imagery is a series of accommodations to a reality which the individual images both hide and disclose. So as Dante penetrates more and more deeply into the "lofty light which in itself is true" (*Par.* XXIII, 54: "dell'alta luce che da sè e vera"), it is only the appearance of the immutable and simple Light that changes as Dante's vision gains in power: "Now my speech will come more short even of what I remember than an infant's who yet bathes his tongue at the breast. Not that the living light at which I gazed had more than a single aspect—for it is ever the same as it was before—but by my sight gaining strength as I looked, the one sole appearance, I myself changing, was, for me, transformed."<sup>35</sup>

It is thus that Dante assimilates objects of thought to objects of sense, the sequence of symbolic representation of a particular reality bringing us closer and closer to what that reality is in itself. The progression of images is not only linear and sequential, each successive one a closer approximation of reality, but in portraying those immaterial realities which are the essence of paradise, one can go only so far when he finds his path cut off: "And so, picturing Paradise, the sacred poem must make a leap like one that finds his path cut off."<sup>36</sup>

A leap to what? To another set of images, to another part of the landscape which he is trying to describe, to another aspect of that level of reality the poet is in which is capable of being imaged.

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35. *Par.* XXXIII, 106.

36. *Par.* XXIII, 61.

L'HISTOIRE AND LA POESIE IN DIDEROT'S  
WRITINGS ON THE NOVEL

By Marlou Switten

FOR those familiar with Diderot's later works, the coupling together of the words *histoire* and *poésie* immediately calls to mind a whole complex of ideas relative to fictional techniques. These techniques have recently been given considerable discussion in books by J. Robert Loy, Georges May and Alice Green Fredman.<sup>1</sup> But there has been no attempt to indicate in particular the derivation and function of the word *histoire* in Diderot's writings on the novel, or to point up the significance of the fusion of *l'histoire* and *la poésie* prescribed in *Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne*. This is perhaps because it has been generally assumed that *histoire* stands for the "truth" and *poésie* for the magic of art, and any discussion of the two terms has been included in a treatment of the question of the illusion of reality. While such an interpretation of these terms is quite valid, it does not take into account the whole group of meanings which come to be associated with *l'histoire* and *la poésie* in Diderot's works. Often, indeed, the *histoire-poésie* relationship merges into the central relationship of reality to fiction. But it also has its own significance which merits investigation.

In order to expose more clearly Diderot's subsequent position, it might be well to recall at the outset, the comparison between "history" and "poetry" in *De la poésie dramatique* (1758):

Si l'on mettait en vers *l'Histoire de Charles XII*, elle n'en serait pas moins une histoire. Si l'on mettait la *Henriade* en prose, elle n'en serait pas moins un poème. Mais l'historien a écrit ce qui est arrivé, purement et simplement, [...] ce qui n'émeut ni n'intéresse pas autant qu'il est possible d'émouvoir et d'intéresser. Le poète eût écrit tout ce qui lui aurait semblé devoir affecter le plus [...] Il eût feint des discours. Il eût chargé l'histoire. Le point important pour lui eût été d'être merveilleux, sans cesser d'être vraisemblable.

[...] une tragédie en prose est tout autant un poème, qu'une tragédie en vers; [...] mais [...] le but de la poésie est plus général que celui de l'histoire. On lit dans l'histoire, ce qu'un homme du caractère de Henri IV a fait et souffert. Mais, combien de circonstances possibles où il eût agi et souffert d'une manière conforme à son caractère, plus merveilleuse, que l'histoire n'offre pas, mais que la poésie imagine!<sup>2</sup>

Here is the framework within which Diderot's thought tends to move in his earlier works. Poetry is to be distinguished from history not by its

1. Alice Green Fredman, *Diderot and Sterne* (New York, 1955); J. Robert Loy, *Diderot's Determined Fatalist* (New York, 1950); Georges May, *Diderot et "La Religieuse"* (Paris and New Haven, 1954).

2. Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Assézat and Tourneux (Paris, 1875-77), VII, 332-33. All references to Diderot's works are in this edition.

outward form but by its aim, by the impression it seeks to create, by the fact that it is imagined. Although Diderot includes with poetry all sorts of fictions ("il en est de même de la comédie et du roman" [VII, 333]), he appears to be thinking principally of tragedy or the epic, referring to other genres by extension. "History" is used in the sense of a narration of past events. The history-poetry confrontation immediately suggests the larger reality-fiction relationship, but in *De la poésie dramatique* Diderot does not have this larger relationship specifically in mind; it remains only as a kind of overtone. Indeed, this comparison smacks strongly of Aristotle and adds little new to firmly entrenched neo-classic theories.

Worth pointing out, perhaps, is the use of the word *merveilleux* to indicate a desirable quality of poetry. The *merveilleux* is carefully separated from the *miraculeux*: the former is based upon events which are possible—"les cas rares de l'ordre général des choses" (VII, 334)—whereas the latter depends upon "les cas naturellement impossibles" (VII, 329). The "miraculous" therefore must be avoided, but the "marvelous" may be utilized to heighten and intensify the effect of the poem.

Probably the most interesting thing in this passage is the importance attributed to the imagination.<sup>3</sup> And in this connection one should recall that a decade later in the *Rêve de d'Alembert* (1769) Diderot explained in greater detail how the imagination, aided by memory transforms *l'histoire* into *la poésie* (II, 178-79). In the *Rêve*, however, the reality-fiction relationship is clearly delineated, and light is thrown upon the psychological process by which one is changed into the other. What was suggested in *De la poésie dramatique* is brilliantly explored in the *Rêve*, no longer in terms encrusted with centuries of Aristotelian exegesis. And it should not be forgotten, although it will not be specifically discussed here, to what extent Diderot's remarkable comprehension of the psychological mechanisms involved in creative activity at once grew out of and determined the fundamental nature of his reflections on fictional (and artistic) techniques.

It can come as a surprise to no one that history is first directly compared and contrasted to the novel in the *Eloge de Richardson* (1761), for the *Eloge*, often given somewhat skimpy treatment, is, in fact, Diderot's first significant piece of critical writing on the novel.<sup>4</sup> There, having praised and sought to explain the astonishing impression of reality created in Richardson's works, he wrote:

O Richardson! j'oserai dire que l'histoire la plus vraie est pleine de mensonges, et que ton roman est plein de vérités. L'histoire peint quelques individus; tu peins

3. For a discussion of Diderot's definition of "imagination" in a passage immediately following the one quoted here see Margaret Gilman, "Imagination and Creation in Diderot," *Diderot Studies II*, ed. Otis E. Fellows and Norman L. Torrey (Syracuse, 1952), pp. 200-20.

4. Its importance has been underlined by Herbert Dieckmann in "The Preface-Annexe of *La Religieuse*," *Diderot Studies II*, pp. 32-33.

l'espèce humaine: l'histoire attribue à quelques individus ce qu'ils n'ont ni dit, ni fait; tout ce que tu attribues à l'homme, il l'a dit et fait: l'histoire n'embrasse qu'une portion de la durée, qu'un point de la surface du globe; tu as embrassé tous les lieux et tous les temps [...]. Sous ce point de vue, j'oserai dire que souvent l'histoire est un mauvais roman; et que le roman, comme tu l'as fait, est une bonne histoire. O peintre de la nature! c'est toi qui ne mens jamais. (V, 221)

Present in this passage, of course, is the notion that Richardson has achieved a valid expression of universal truth. In a sense, therefore, the *Eloge* can be said to reaffirm the Aristotelian dictum that poetry is more general than history. But how much more than this doctrine is to be found in the *Eloge*! To begin with, more subtle relationships between history and a work of the imagination are laid bare: "l'*histoire*" (and the meaning of "history" is approximately the same as in *De la poésie dramatique*) may in fact be "vraie," but it appears sometimes full of "mensonges"; on the other hand, the imagined work of art—here the novel—while in essence a kind of "mensonge," is "plein de vérités." There, in brief, is posed the whole question of truth in fiction. The comparison between *le roman* and *l'*histoire** is especially interesting in view of what Diderot says about these two later. At the beginning of the *Eloge*, Diderot had been reluctant to apply the word *roman* to Richardson's works at all because "par un roman, on a entendu jusqu'à ce jour un tissu d'événements chimériques et frivoles, dont la lecture était dangereuse pour le goût et pour les mœurs" (V, 212-13). He would therefore like to find a new name for Richardson's novels in order to lay stress upon their originality. He does not find a new name in the *Eloge*; but the passage quoted shows the lines along which his thoughts are moving and presages the later terminology (in *Jacques* notably) in which *l'*histoire** comes to stand for the realistic novel while *le roman* is definitely allied with *le romanesque*.<sup>5</sup>

Not until 1770 in *Les Deux Amis de Bourbone* is the new terminology fully developed. At the conclusion of this story, which is in itself a criticism of another by Saint-Lambert,<sup>6</sup> Diderot differentiates between three kinds of tales: "le conte merveilleux," "le conte plaisant" and "le conte historique" (V, 276). "Le conte plaisant [...] où le conteur ne se propose ni l'imitation de la nature, ni la vérité, ni l'illusion" need not detain us here. A word is necessary, however, about "le conte merveilleux." In *De la poésie dramatique* the aim of the poet was "d'être merveilleux, sans cesser d'être vraisemblable." *Le merveilleux* was defined there as that which is

5. Alice Green Fredman has pointed out that the terminology of *Jacques* was foreshadowed even as early as the *Bijoux indiscrets* (op. cit., p. 86). The fact that Diderot uses *histoire* in passing, as it were, in the *Bijoux* would perhaps support the idea, to be advanced later, that the term, applied to fiction to distinguish fact from fancy, was fairly current in Diderot's time.

6. On the genesis of Diderot's tale see Edward J. Geary, "The Composition and Publication of *Les Deux Amis de Bourbone*," *Diderot Studies*, ed. Otis E. Fellows and Norman L. Torrey (Syracuse, 1949), pp. 27-45.

very rare but still possible. This does not seem to be precisely the meaning of *le merveilleux* in *Les Deux Amis*. Here Diderot says of the *conte merveilleux*: "La nature y est exagérée; la vérité y est hypothétique: [.] En entrant dans [le] poème, vous mettez le pied dans une terre inconnue, où rien ne se passe comme dans celle que vous habitez, mais où tout se fait en grand comme les choses se font autour de vous en petit" (V, 276). *Le merveilleux* here is *l'exagéré* or, if you will, the epic, and good examples are to be found in Homer.<sup>7</sup> Diderot thus separates the tradition of the epic from the *conte historique*.

The *conte historique* is, of course, the realistic tale, and never again will Diderot use the word *roman* to refer to the early gropings of what we now call the realistic novel: he has, as it were, found the new word he needed in the *Eloge*. In explaining the nature of the *conte historique*, Diderot defines a new relationship between *l'histoire* and *la poésie*: they are not contrasted here but combined. Without "poetry" and "eloquence" the *conte historique* would be dull and lifeless. It is the task of the *conteur historique* to be at once "historien et poète, vérifique et menteur" (V, 277).

There are two problems involved in this oft-quoted passage. One concerns the effect and function of literature, the other the way a piece of literature is put together. It is affirmed, on the one hand, that objective and disinterested truth alone is not a proper goal of literature because it has no emotional impact. All literature is a kind of lie, and a lie which masquerades in uninspired fashion as reality itself can only end up being "plat et froid" (V, 276). In Diderot's view, the *conteur historique* must always strive to affect and persuade, that is to say, to reach his audience, which he does chiefly by means of *la poésie* and *l'éloquence*. Thus is defined one of the most important functions of the poetic element. These notions do not represent anything startlingly new for Diderot; he had always envisaged literature rather more as a communicative rapport between author and reader than as an embodiment of beauty. Let us not accuse him, however, of seeking only emotional effects. The desire for affectivity is motivated also by purely artistic considerations. The *conte historique* is based, after all, upon illusion; and if, in one sense, the persuasiveness of poetry is the arch-enemy of illusion, it is also, in another sense, its only resource: an illusion which is not convincing is no longer an illusion.

On the practical level, Diderot tries to demonstrate how "history" and "poetry" may be united. To weld together these contradictory elements, the *conteur historique* should scatter through his tale facts so vividly real that the reader must exclaim: "Ma foi, cela est vrai: on n'invente pas ces choses-là" (V, 277). Like the painter who turns an ideal head into a portrait by placing a scar or a wart on the forehead, the *conteur historique* by introducing simple, characteristic, irrefutably exact details lends credibility to his fiction. Thus both art and truth will be served.

The basic ideas in *Les Deux Amis de Bourbonne* stem logically from those

7. *L'exagéré* should not be confused with *le romanesque*. Cf. XI, 373.

expressed in the *Eloge*. Diderot was probably attracted to the novel in the first place because he had discovered in Richardson a type of literature with tremendous power to touch the heart and uplift the soul. He had also admired in Richardson the wealth of incidental detail which created such a vivid impression of reality and made the novel as Richardson used it "une bonne histoire." In fact, the idea of "les petits faits vrais" reaches back to *De la poésie dramatique*. This is not surprising, for Diderot had read Richardson and had no doubt begun to reflect upon the possibilities of the novel by 1758 (see VII, 380). But the difference between history and poetry established in *De la poésie dramatique* is effaced in *Les Deux Amis*, and these two are combined to form the *conte historique*. The *conteur historique* may pretend to write "ce qui est arrivé, purement et simplement" (VII, 332); but how much does he add "que l'histoire n'offre pas, mais que la poésie imagine" (VII, 333)!

Diderot's choice of *histoire* and *conte historique* to designate what the nineteenth century was to call the realistic novel was not altogether the result of his own originality or of his desire to anchor fiction in reality. As a matter of fact, *roman* had pretty generally fallen into disrepute by the early part of the eighteenth century. Before Diderot's time the name had become identified with frivolous and fanciful tales, and writers, seemingly motivated by the desire to clothe their fictions in credibility—perhaps also in respectability, for nobody appeared to treat the novel seriously—had taken to using other titles. There had been a whole flowering of *historiens*, *chroniqueurs* and *mémorialistes* but few, if any, *romanciers*. In 1707 a certain Mlle de La Roche-Guilhem expressed ideas which curiously anticipate those of Diderot: "Si j'avois voulu faire un Roman de la vie de Jacqueline de Baviere, j'aurois pu composer un gros volume en inventant de beaux incidens; mais il auroit falu de nécessité démentir l'Histoire, & m'éloigner du sujet. J'ai donc mieux aimé me réstreindre dans les limites d'une Nouvelle Historique, qui ne sauroit être inconnue à ceux qui ont la moindre intelligence des derniers siècles."<sup>8</sup> To be sure, as Georges May has made clear in a recent article, these "histories" were as fictitious as any novels had ever been.<sup>9</sup> Professor May points out further that at the end of the seventeenth century, history was hardly considered a science in itself, an objective recounting of facts. If novelists called their works "histoires," it was partly because history was thought of as a sort of novel (pp. 166–68). This attitude toward history, however, as Paul Hazard has effectively shown, was by no means continued throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> And it is important to remember that when Diderot used *histoire* in *De*

8. Quoted in S. Paul Jones, *A List of French Prose Fiction from 1700–1750* (New York, 1939), p. xv. Jones states also that of the works in his list "only four or five [...] bear the word [roman] in the title or subtitle. The words *histoire*, *nouvelle*, *anecdote*, *mémoires*, *conte* etc. have replaced it."

9. Georges May, "L'Histoire a-t-elle engendré le roman? Aspects français de la question au seuil du siècle des lumières," *RHL*, LV (avril-juin 1955), 155–76.

10. Paul Hazard, *La Pensée européenne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1946), I, 324–37.

*la poésie dramatique*, or even in the *Eloge de Richardson*, he apparently meant a faithful and reasonably exact portrayal of events—history as exemplified in the works of Voltaire, for instance. A modern concept of history seems to have underlain Diderot's reflections on the novel, and only in the light of such a concept can the full import of his reflections be grasped. But, be that as it may, the significant point here is that the word *histoire* applied to prose fiction belonged to the general vocabulary of Diderot's age, and the mere fact that he so used it is not extraordinary. When he applied it to *Jacques* to differentiate his work from contemporary *romans* he probably harbored somewhat the same sentiments as those described by Mlle de La Roche-Guilhem.

On the other hand, however, it is apparent that Diderot did wish to distinguish what he was doing from the efforts of the "historians" themselves. Alice Fredman has suggested that "in separating the 'history' from the 'novel,' he is, perhaps, anticipating the later distinctions between 'novel' and 'romance'" drawn by English writers.<sup>11</sup> This may well be. But it seems to me that in so far as the "history" versus "novel" question is concerned, Diderot was, to a certain extent at least, not only anticipator but also anticipated, and so the essential question becomes not just how he reacted to the "novel" but in addition how he reacted to other "histories" which purported to be truer than "novels." In *Les Deux Amis* it is implied that the ordinary historian-storyteller is a "menteur plat et froid" (V, 276). Diderot was certainly not alone in this opinion. Georges May has indicated that many eminent persons, among them Bayle, strongly protested the effrontery of pseudo-historical novelists.<sup>12</sup> Such novelists are criticized by Diderot just as vigorously as the fabricators of "*événements chimériques et frivoles*" (V, 212). Neither extreme, in his view, is capable of achieving entirely praiseworthy results. If the "historians" were closest to his own ideal, he would yet separate himself from them.<sup>13</sup> The reasons seem fairly clear: he had no desire to be counted among those who tried to pass off mere fancies of the imagination as the truth, even less desire to be placed beside those who may have literally intended to turn the novel into history. For he realized—as is illustrated by the coupling together of *l'histoire* and *la poésie* to form the *conte historique*—that history all by itself does not make literature; what is necessary is to transmute "history" into art.

11. Fredman, op. cit., p. 110. Professor Fredman had earlier offered a somewhat different interpretation of the word *histoire* particularly as it pertains to *Jacques*. See Alice Green, "Diderot's Fictional Worlds," *Diderot Studies*, pp. 20-22.

12. Loc. cit., p. 160.

13. Alice Green ("Diderot's Fictional Worlds," pp. 10-15) has discussed Diderot's awareness of differences between himself and his epoch. The only real affinity Diderot might have felt, in so far as his countrymen are concerned, was with the Abbé Du-laurens. See Otis E. Fellows and Alice G. Green, "Diderot and the Abbé Dulaurens," *Diderot Studies*, pp. 82-86.

*Jacques le fataliste* may be viewed in this perspective.<sup>14</sup> There *histoire* occurs in several different contexts. When Diderot says, "Je fais l'*histoire*," he usually means "I'm telling the truth," referring to the whole novel. In addition, various *histoires*—such as the interminable history of Jacques' loves or the celebrated one of Mme de La Pommeraye—are related during the course of the book. When the word is applied to these, it does not appear to have the particular meaning attached to it as it refers to the whole of *Jacques*. The question of new terminology is not primarily at stake in these cases: the word means simply "story." And yet these *histoires* within the *histoire* are not without significance. It is obvious enough that the story of Jacques' loves, upon whose flimsy frame the whole book hangs, is but a parody of the love-story plot so prevalent then and now in fiction. In another sense, in the words of Leo Spitzer, these "histories" might be said to represent "the fixed experiences of the past" to which Jacques' Master would wish to subject life; but life continually breaks in upon them.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, stories like Mme de La Pommeraye's could serve as vivid examples of the *conte historique*. The impression that they are intended to do just that is strengthened by dialogue which accompanies or follows some of the stories. The Pommeraye story is a case in point: Jacques, his Master and the Landlady become involved in a spirited discussion of literary techniques and moral problems. The Master, for example, accuses the Landlady of sinning in her story "contre les règles d'Aristote, d'Horace, de Vida et de Le Bossu." She replies: "Je ne connais ni bossu ni droit: je vous ai dit la chose comme elle s'est passée, sans en rien omettre, sans y rien ajouter" (VI, 160). Her total ignorance of the learned gentlemen cited by the Master points up comically the uselessness of applying tradition-bound rules to stories which are faithful reflections of reality. The question of realism in *Jacques* is thus treated on a double plane, for the interpolated tales stand in the same relation to the person telling them as the entire book to Diderot.<sup>16</sup> Just as the Landlady insists that she is telling "la chose comme elle s'est passée," so Diderot declares "Je fais l'*histoire*." And yet, he always says this with tongue in cheek, for he is not to be caught in the same trap as those who proclaim with utmost seriousness that their fictions are true. Behind the statement there lurks, perhaps, a grain of satire directed at the "menteur plat et froid." Diderot's reader is not deceived; he always knows that *Jacques* is a work of the imagination. So it is that *histoire* has a more complex meaning than is evi-

14. To a certain extent one might also view Diderot's other novels and tales in this way. That *La Religieuse* is compounded of "history" and "poetry," for instance, has been convincingly shown by Georges May (*Diderot et "La Religieuse,"* Chapter IX). Here, of course, there enters also the *roman-mémoires* which is indeed important. But only in *Jacques* is "history" directly posed as a major artistic and intellectual factor, and so I have preferred to restrict my discussion to this novel.

15. Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History* (Princeton, 1948), p. 189, n. 42.

16. Cf. Fredman, *Diderot and Sterne*, pp. 152-53.

dent at first glance. On the one hand, Diderot uses it to stress that he is trying to tell the truth. But the paradoxical manner in which he uses it enables him to suggest what kind of truth he was trying to tell and to show that the very desire to tell purely historical truth should not be the aim of the artist.<sup>17</sup>

It is to be expected that the reader of *Jacques le fataliste* will never be allowed to forget that the *conteur historique* is something other than a mere chronicler of events. Facts, however necessary, neither can nor need be slavishly obeyed. Diderot had pointed out on more than one occasion that one cannot ever relate the truth exactly even if one wants to, and he again suggests this idea in *Jacques*. When the Master bids Jacques, "ne sois ni fade panégyriste, ni censeur amer; dis la chose comme elle est," Jacques rejoins: "Cela n'est pas aisé. N'a-t-on pas son caractère, son intérêt, son goût, ses passions, d'après quoi l'on exagère ou l'on atténue? Dis la chose comme elle est! [...] Cela n'arrive peut-être pas deux fois en un jour dans toute une grande ville" (VI, 59). An experience recounted is subtly colored by the narrator's personality; how much deeper and more vivid is the coloring when the personality is that of an artist. It is not only unnecessary but quite impossible to transpose literally into fiction what happens in every-day existence without any sort of imaginative reshaping.

Strictly speaking, of course, the historian as well as the novelist relates truth as he sees it. History as well as art passes through human personality. But whereas history must be verifiable, art need only be credible, and the degree of imaginative reshaping in the latter case is much greater. Diderot knew this; he had said as much in *De la poésie dramatique* and later in the *Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* (II, 119). Maturity and his own experimentation in the novel form had deepened and refined his ideas, however, and what seemed simply and clearly defined earlier is treated with more finesse in *Jacques*. The paradoxical nature of illusion and, indeed, of truth itself is emphasized. To the *conteur historique* Diderot says in *Les Deux Amis* that illusion results from the judicious utilization of elements taken from nature whose veracity cannot be denied. The reader of *Jacques le fataliste*, in contrast, is frankly warned not to be seduced by the fallacy that truth is always or necessarily credible; it may be as incredible as the poet's wildest fancies. When the doubtful reader exclaims that Jacques' Captain and his duelling friend are indeed extraordinary men, Diderot replies: "Et c'est là ce qui vous met en défiance? Premièrement, la nature est si variée, surtout dans les instincts et les caractères, qu'il n'y a rien de si bizarre dans l'imagination d'un poète dont l'expérience et l'observation ne vous offrissent le modèle dans la nature" (VI, 68). Of

17. It is in this context that the discussion of the word *histoire* merges most completely into the whole question of reality versus fiction. For extensive treatment of this question respecting *Jacques* see Alice Fredman, *Diderot and Sterne*, Chapter IV, and J. Robert Loy, *Diderot's Determined Fatalist*, Chapter V.

course, Diderot had already stated in *De la poésie dramatique* that "[le poète] a le modèle de sa conduite dans les cas rares de l'ordre général des choses" (VII, 334). But he hastened to add: "Si le fait historique [...] est trop [merveilleux], il l'affaiblira par des incidents communs" (VII, 335). In *De la poésie dramatique*, Diderot is indicating how the poet can satisfy the conditions of a rather narrow concept of verisimilitude; in *Jacques*, he is chiding the reader for not realizing to what extent "les cas rares" are a part of every-day existence—a substantial and important difference.

But there is more to it than that. Diderot knew well that the line which separates the true from the false is never a clear one. ("L'art poétique serait donc bien avancé, si le traité de la certitude historique était fait" [*De la poésie dramatique*, VII, 335]). Repeatedly in *Jacques* he tells the reader: "Soyez circonspect si vous ne voulez pas prendre dans cet entretien de Jacques et de son maître le vrai pour le faux, le faux pour le vrai" (VI, 68), or again: "Celui qui prendrait ce que j'écris pour la vérité, serait peut-être moins dans l'erreur que celui qui le prendrait pour une fable" (VI, 21). Here is the very crux of the matter: so closely entwined are fact and fiction that neither reader nor even novelist knows where one begins and the other leaves off. We have reached the point where the fiction appears more convincing than history itself. The imagination has produced an illusion, an intimate fusion—far more intimate than *Les Deux Amis* would have us believe—between history and poetry, and with it, an impression of truthfulness far greater than that created by a recounting of verifiable facts.

From here, it is but one step to say that the novel is better "history" than history. Diderot undoubtedly hoped that one might say of his novels what he had said of Richardson's: "[...] souvent l'histoire est un mauvais roman; et [...] le roman, comme tu l'as fait, est une bonne histoire. O peintre de la nature! c'est toi qui ne mens jamais" (V, 221). Is universality, after all, the most precious ingredient which a dose of poetry brings to the *conte historique*? Possibly so, for ultimately "la bonne histoire" becomes a glimpse of the ideal. The basic problem for Diderot is how to tell the truth about "quelques individus" and at the same time about man in general, how to focus upon "une portion de la durée [...] un point de la surface du globe" and at the same time embrace "tous les lieux et tous les temps" (V, 221).

Various techniques in *Jacques le fataliste* make this sufficiently clear. Among these, Diderot's refusal to localize and specify his two heroes is perhaps the most obvious (e.g., VI, 9). What Georges May has said about the techniques used in *La Religieuse* might also be applied to *Jacques*: universality is suggested "par la multiplicité des événements, des personnages ou des situations." In a sense, just as "Sœur Suzanne devient le symbole de toute religieuse malgré elle, non pas par l'imprécision de sa psychologie, mais par la diversité des couvents où elle se trouve, des mères

supérieures qui la gouvernent, des expériences psychologiques qui lui sont ainsi permises,"<sup>18</sup> so Jacques and his Master, because of the variety of adventures in which they find themselves engaged, come to symbolize human beings in general in the face of destiny. Certainly, however much he may have proclaimed and believed in the realistic doctrine, Diderot never abandoned the classical ideal of art which is universally true. One must, in this context, recall his theories concerning the *modèle idéal*: simply to copy uncomprehendingly what is in front of one's nose is to make a portrait. The artist must shape reality imaginatively into a coherent whole, a *modèle idéal* through which he can reveal truth. The *conteur historique* adds to his "tête idéale" "une cicatrice légère, une verrue à l'une de ses tempes, une coupure imperceptible à la lèvre inférieure" (V, 277), such that the ideal gives the illusion of being the particular. But the particular in this case has first passed through the ideal; and there indeed is the difference between the historian who recounts what has happened and the artist who, uniting history and poetry, turns what has happened into a work of art.

The profusion of pseudo-histories, chronicles, memoirs and such in eighteenth-century France indicates plainly enough the origins of the realistic novel.<sup>19</sup> And if Diderot chose to use *histoire* it was because he wished to situate himself within this development, even though his personal evolution divided him rather sharply from his contemporaries. Not only did the eighteenth century see the beginnings of various types of prose fiction, it saw also, toward its close, the emergence of the novel as a literary form. To be sure, in the absence of recognized masters, in the absence of a Balzac, a Stendhal, a Flaubert, the novel could not claim the prestige of poetry or the drama. It could, however, begin to take itself seriously. Indeed, for the novel to become a literary form, it had first to recognize itself as art; it had to distinguish itself from the chronicles, the memoirs, the adventures real or fanciful with which it had contracted so fruitful an alliance. Such a recognition, such a distinction were the very things Diderot endeavored to establish. It was surely no accident that he was a self-conscious narrator, that he was concerned as few other writers have been with what makes fiction fiction and differentiates it from other products of the human spirit. What he has to say about *l'histoire* and *la poésie* reflects this concern. It does more: it holds up to the future new ideas, boldly sketched, imaginatively presented. "Une bonne histoire" may well be only

18. May, *Diderot et "La Religieuse,"* p. 200.

19. See May, "L'Histoire a-t-elle engendré le roman?" in particular the conclusions, p. 176. Chauncey Wetmore Wells suggests that the novel grew out of history, memoirs and the drama ("The Poesy of Fiction," *Essays in Criticism*, second series [Berkeley, 1934], p. 115). Concerning the debt of the novel to *les annales*, *les histoires secrètes* and *les mémoires* see also André Le Breton, *Le Roman français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1925).

an illusion; but when this obvious deception is redeemed by an eloquent convincingness, the illusion, through which the real is transfixed and illumined, becomes more significant than life itself. Here indeed is a conception of "history" as an artistic form which may have been one of Diderot's most unique contributions to his century.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE LITERARY ARTIST'S DETACHMENT  
AS SEEN BY J. BENDA, J.-P. SARTRE, AND  
THIERRY MAULNIER

By Robert W. Belvin

JULIEN Benda's *La Trahison des clercs*, which precipitated a violent literary quarrel in 1927, was itself the crystallization, or perhaps the residue, of a long French literary tradition of disinterestedness and detachment. Even those writers in the past who had taken sides generally thought their first duty to "see clearly" and "objectively" the universal truths to which they were dedicating themselves. A countering tradition, however, of partisanship and particularism has received fresh impetus since 1940. The most important causes probably were Jean-Paul Sartre's stress on *engagement* (i.e., commitment to and participation in practical and social action), which seems in part a reaction to Benda's stress on detachment; and the wartime spectacle of certain writers deeply involved in the Resistance while others sat the war out.<sup>1</sup>

The proposal here is that the most important issues in this problem can be joined by contrasting the views of Benda and Sartre and that a reconciliation can be found in a view put forth by Thierry Maulnier. It is not only a matter of presenting the arguments pro and con but of defining the kind of detachment or participation that each of these critics thinks appropriate to the literary artist in fulfilling his role. Nor can one limit oneself to the question of political detachment versus partisanship, for to do so would be to preclude a solution. The issue of detachment or participation is related to many other apparent antitheses and conflicts whose relations should be illuminated by this paper: being vs. becoming, contemplation vs. practical and decisive action, the abstract and universal vs. the concrete and particular, absolute vs. relative, objective vs. subjective, intellect vs. emotions and sensations, spiritual vs. material, value vs. fact, the gratuitous vs. the instrumental or the necessary—not to mention freedom vs. determinism and history.<sup>2</sup>

Although Julien Benda is no longer so important in French criticism as when his ideas seemed fresh, he is still looked upon as the official spokesman for rationalism and for the concept of classic detachment. A French Jew—he was born in 1867 in Paris of a freethinking bourgeois family—Benda is the inheritor of the rationalism of Spinoza and the democratic ideals of the Enlightenment. His enemies, however, regard him as a relic

1. That the issue of *engagement* still has some life left in it is suggested by J. Piatier ("Poésie amoureuse et poésie 'engagée' au seizième siècle," *Le Monde*, 9 décembre 1955, p. 7) reviewing a thesis of Henri Weber, *La Créditration poétique en France au seizième siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1955).

2. Necessarily, other oppositions are pertinent to the issues raised here: eternal-temporal, miraculous-everyday, imaginary-real, etc.

of the eighteenth century, the unnatural child of an old man. In Benda's eyes, the principles of detachment, of classical reason, and of democracy have all been betrayed by modern intellectuals, and each betrayal originates in "irrationalism." Hence he has been crusading against "irrationalism," especially Bergsonism, since early in the century. Man must be true to his essence, his "rational soul," even when it is not most useful.

In *La Trahison des clercs*, Benda's thesis is that civilization is impossible without a division of function: beside the laymen, whose function is the pursuit of temporal interests, there must be a class of men who deprecate "realist" passions and glorify spiritual values. These men, the *clercs* or intellectuals, are especially needed because this is an age of partisan politics, motivated by two basic passions, pride and material self-interest. The *clerc* should proclaim that it is the very absence of practical value which constitutes the grandeur of his teaching. He must be prepared to suffer for his stand, to pay with his life if necessary.

In the late nineteenth century the *clercs* began to stimulate rather than curb partisan and nationalistic passions. Benda cites such writers as Maurras, Barrès, Péguy, d'Annunzio, and Kipling. Many *clercs* not only became doctrinaires and pamphleteers but made their art subservient to political ends.

The change in the *clercs* reflected itself in the exaltation of the particular, e.g., of the individual and the special group as against the universal, of the subjective as against the objective. Benda finds similarly an exaltation of the will and of action above intellectual probity, detachment, and contemplation.

He makes an important qualification which is ignored in most attacks against his doctrine of detachment: a *clerc* may, on occasion, enter into the world of action if it is to defend a universal principle like justice or freedom, rather than aggrandize any individual or group (pp. 62-64). But Benda also makes one admission which saps his own thesis, or at least his program for *clercs*. Their new faith, he concedes, is largely a result of social conditions, and the real evil is perhaps not the *treason* of the *clercs* but their disappearance; it is perhaps the impossibility today of remaining a *clerc*.

*Belphegor* (Paris, 1918) and *La France byzantine ou Le Triomphe de la littérature pure* (Paris, 1945) both represent limited engagements in the war between the universal and the particular which goes on eternally in Benda's universe. Whereas in *La Trahison* the alignment generally had been universal truth and morality versus self-interest and pride, in the esthetic conflict described in *Belphegor* the universal is represented by the intellect, and the particular by emotion and sensation, which Benda considers the exclusive and somewhat tainted property of the individual. The true *clerc* finds his joy only in thought and disdains sensation (*La Trahison*, p. 216). This limitation by Benda would surely seem to cramp the artist and even the literary theorist.

In both *Belphegor* and *La France byzantine* Benda criticizes the antipathy of contemporary artists to the absolute or the universal, and the intellect. He finds this antipathy in their preoccupation with the unique, the subjective, the relative, the dynamic. The disdain for organized and precise thought reveals itself in ambiguity, obscurity, Gidian "availability," and surrealist wonder.

If the objects of attack of *La Trahison* were those guilty of *insufficient detachment* from the particular, the targets in *La France byzantine*, the "pure" *littérateurs*, are those so preoccupied with their particular emotions and sensations, especially their esthetic feelings, that they become guilty of an *excessive esthetic detachment*. Benda believes that "pure" literature presents two complementary features common to all "decadent" literatures: formalism (and verbalism) and fragility of content—content, for Benda, being universal truths and values. The "so-called decadent" periods are perhaps the "most properly literary," i.e., anti-intellectual (p. 225). (This assertion seems the inevitable consequence of Benda's excessively rationalistic and Platonic premises).

By splitting off "true literary men" from intellectuals, Benda is also presumably exempting literary men from the injunctions earlier imposed upon intellectuals in *La Trahison*. Hence to all such *littérateurs*, like the poets who had been grudgingly exempted from "universalism" in that book, would be extended the dubious privilege of dipping into the particular. What with their emotions and their sensations, Benda seems determined to wash his hands of them.

In fact he has, in the last analysis, washed his hands of virtually the whole world and its slow stain. T. S. Eliot believes that Benda makes it a part of his deliberate program to offer nothing in place of what he denounces, that "he has a romantic view of critical detachment which limits his interest."<sup>3</sup>

Like Benda and Maulnier, Jean-Paul Sartre is voluntarily *déclassé*, though not so completely as Benda. Rather there is a displacement toward the proletariat from the Paris bourgeoisie into which Sartre was born (in 1905). He is not a better critic than Benda, but he has been more successful—and more professional—as a philosopher and a creative artist. In fact, as Maulnier points out, Sartre's situation has been almost unprecedented in France. In 1942 he was only one of fifteen or twenty new French writers worthy of attention. "En 1948, il est une vedette internationale" ("Situations et situation de Sartre," *Revue Hommes et Mondes*, VII [1948], 689). His work was already large and diverse in 1948. He was even treated by the Communist Party as a public enemy, though its attitude has since softened, especially after the presentation of Sartre's *Nekrassov*.

Sartre's views on *engagement* are presented most explicitly in *Les Temps modernes*.

3. T. S. Eliot, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," *Selected Essays, 1917-32* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), p. 383.

*Modernes*, Nos. 17-22 (1947), and republished in "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" (*Situations, II* [Paris: Gallimard, 1948], pp. 57-330). This manifesto is intended to support the Sartrian school of atheistic existentialists which has, as Maulnier says, some "pretensions toward legislating" in the domains of philosophy, politics, letters and the other arts. Even Maulnier, who disagrees with its conclusions, considers this document important: "[Il] aura de l'influence, non pas seulement en raison des idées qu'il contient, toujours brillantes, toujours appuyées sur une forte argumentation, parfois dangereusement spécieuses, parfois absolument inacceptables, mais en raison de la signature qu'il porte" (p. 688).

Sartre, in describing the writer's role, dwells on the relation of reading to the freedom of the writer and the reader—presumably because freedom is pivotal in existentialism. According to this "metaphysical naturalism" which continues the tradition of French humanism, the individual is free but not independent, for he needs others in order to create his own essence. Similarly the artist needs an audience for his work of art to exist objectively. The artist cannot see the esthetic object in itself, for he remembers too well its development. It is thus a plea to the reader for its existence, an appeal to his freedom, a claim upon his esthetic sensibility comparable to that of a moral imperative upon his moral sensibility. In fact, at the bottom of the esthetic imperative: "au fond de l'impératif esthétique nous discernons l'impératif moral" (*Les Temps Modernes*, No. 17, p. 804). The work of art is a categorical imperative, an absolute end or value:

Because the writer must address himself to the freedom of his readers, he must not dominate them by addressing himself to their passivity, by trying to manipulate their emotions directly through sentimental rather than esthetic appeals. If he does the book ceases to be an end, and becomes instrumental. The author must step back from his own emotions and transform them into "free emotions" (*émotions libres*) as does the reader.<sup>4</sup> Then the book will not be used to create feelings in the reader, but the feelings will be used to create the book.

To bring ideas, feelings, and values into play without being dominated by any single factor, the reader must attain a certain esthetic detachment or distance both from the esthetic object and from his own beliefs and values.<sup>5</sup> He has chosen to lend himself to the literary work, and he knows

4. No. 17, p. 799. Judging from the context, "free" is used here more in the sense of "detached" or "disengaged" than in the sense of "liberated" for it is actually the man who is liberated, more than the emotions. "Free emotions" is unfortunately suggestive of the use of "free" in "free associations," for the latter are characterized by being uncontrolled whereas the important thing about "free emotions" is that they are no longer "ruling" passions, that they do not control but are controlled.

5. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the familiar question whether the reader should or can suspend his *disbelief*. Sartre's opinion, however, that the reader is dominated neither by the esthetic object nor by his familiar beliefs and values, raises the question how far a man can divorce himself even temporarily from his most fundamental *values* or his emotional reactions or attitudes. For even if a man can

that at any moment he can wake up, but he does not want to; reading is a deliberate dream. This is possible, says Sartre, because esthetic objects operate in another realm, in the Imaginary, a mode of existence different from reality—in that esthetic objects exist in the Imaginary out of time and space and are meaningful, whereas reality is absurd and irrational.

The author places himself between the view of other men and the "finality without aim" seen in the illusory order or design of the beauties of nature, and animates nature with his own values, so that it becomes an end, an autotelic task for the reader. The esthetic object, which is the world viewed through the Imaginary, enables the reader to retrieve and internalize what is not himself, to transform the given into the imperative, or fact into value.

In Sartre's ethic each man is dependent on, and must also assume responsibility for, all others. The author must not contemplate the world coldly but animate it with his admiration or his indignation, and offer it for the generosity of the reader. No matter how mean and hopeless the humanity depicted, the book must seem informed with generosity. Since he depends on the reader's freedom and generosity, the author is morally obliged to sustain these values. Thus not only does everyone have a moral responsibility to participate in esthetic creations, but these must be infused with moral values. "L'écrivain [...] n'a qu'un seul sujet: la liberté."<sup>6</sup>

Sartre sees prose as a kind of action. Unlike poetry, prose is *engagée*, committed to or enmeshed in action. Poetry may begin with feelings, even political ones, but transforms them into words, into things, and stops there just as the painter is content to work with colors, the musician with tones. The prose writer, however, deals with words not as things but as symbols of, say, injustices or abuses.

Sartre thinks the only way the writer can escape history is by not trying to. Otherwise he helps maintain the *status quo* and its injustices. The esthete who withdraws from life or the *clerc* who dedicates himself to preserving transcendent values is always "on the side of the oppressors," and a parasite at that. At best the *clerc* chooses between being a watchdog or a jester. "M. Benda a choisi la bouffonnerie et M. Marcel la niche."

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suspend disbelief, it is not nearly so easy voluntarily to suspend feeling revulsion at a horrible sight. Sartre himself apparently does not envisage complete detachment from one's values, for he insists that respect for freedom is a prerequisite of esthetic communion.

6. Sartre, No. 17, p. 804. Thierry Maulnier scores Sartre's exploitation of the ambiguity of the word freedom in identifying the esthetic freedom of the reader with the cause of political and economic freedom. ("Jean-Paul Sartre et le suicide de la littérature," *La Table Ronde*, I [février 1948], 206). One might add that if it is possible to be free politically and not economically, it certainly seems far-fetched for Sartre to say that the "esthetic freedom" of the reader is incompatible with a lack of political freedom. Moreover, the opinions of what constitutes true freedom are at least as various as the opinions of what constitutes good art, so that this notion of freedom does not seem to furnish a very valuable criterion.

(Gabriel Marcel is a Christian existentialist). Sartre would have writers defend not abstract values but "concrete everyday freedom" by taking sides in social struggles. Thus writers can at least help shape history (No. 19, p. 1217).

Merely writing about a situation is an incentive to action, especially since the writer will usually color it with his own values—presumably ethical ones in the main, if they move men ultimately to action. The proper subject of literature is "*l'homme dans le monde*" (No. 19, p. 1216). Significantly Sartre has added "*dans le monde*" to this Socratic idea, for while Socrates conceived a universal, undated man, Sartre sees a historically situated man. And since every book is a social fact with social effects, the aim of existentialist writers is to change man's social condition and his conception of himself. More specifically, their aim is to gain freedom through a socialistic union of European states (No. 22, p. 113).

This final pragmatic emphasis suggests a certain inconsistency in Sartre. In his introductory theoretical analysis he insisted, apparently to be consistent with his principle of freedom, that the literary work be regarded as an end in itself, instead of suggesting, as does Maulnier, that for the writer the book may operate dually as end and means. Sartre first insisted that to use the book to evoke emotions directly is to make it instrumental, then shifted his stance—imperceptibly, with a transitional term like "free emotions"—and wound up by saying in effect that the reader *is* to be manipulated, but artistically—and for his own good—in the name of ultimate freedom. This initial stand is apparently meant to found his esthetics in existentialist philosophy, while his too practical application of this theory may be "bad conscience" manifesting itself in the need to feel useful.

In an answer to Sartre, Maulnier speaks of the writer's need for self-justification.<sup>7</sup> The writer's "bad conscience," which Sartre sees as a bourgeois phenomenon, has always plagued writers, says Maulnier. It stems from a fundamental ambiguity wherein the writer's function combines a kind of parasitism with a high degree of social responsibility. Similarly the writer would like both to fascinate and to edify. This ambiguity is intensified for Sartre because he suspects that his *artistic* works are too well attuned to their period, that they may be pandering to the destructive and masochistic side of a troubled society, that this may account for his perhaps too easy success; and he tries to ease his conscience by "ethico-political" preachments.

This is largely an *ad hoc* explanation of Sartre's situation and the causes of his belief, but before presenting Maulnier's extended doctrinal attack on Sartre's thesis itself, it would be best to characterize Maulnier and the position from which he levels his attack.

Formerly of the *Figaro*, Thierry Maulnier (born Jacques Talagrand in

7. Maulnier, "La Littérature est-elle justifiable?" *L'Arche*, III (décembre 1945-janvier 1946), 91-101.

1909) is now dramatic critic of *La Revue de Paris*. A graduate of L'Ecole Normale Supérieure, this perennial *normalien* still writes much literary and political criticism, though he has turned increasingly to writing plays, such as *Jeanne et les juges* and *Le Profanateur*. Claude Roy characterizes Maulnier as "a *clerc* after the ideal of Julien Benda" but thinks that Maulnier's thought escapes the asceticism and monotony of the life of the *clerc*.<sup>8</sup> Maulnier would probably not feel flattered by the comparison, since he has attacked Benda for his extreme rationalism.<sup>9</sup>

Roy contends that Maulnier's writings are quite significant regarding the problems of the bourgeois thinker. Maulnier has shifted from the "heterodox Maurrasism" of his youth to a "reticent and dissident Marxism." Maulnier apparently had too much respect for Nietzsche and Hegel to be a complete follower of Maurras. And if he did undertake the cause of Maurras and with it a ruthless criticism of democracy, he has never lent himself to anti-Semitism or had recourse to "Action, Race, Blood" (Roy, p. 13).

Maulnier's *Violence et conscience* (Paris, 1945) represents the ripening of ideas which had emerged in his *Mythes socialistes* (Paris, 1936) and in *Au delà du nationalisme* (Paris, 1938). He now accepts most of Marx's analysis of capitalism. Maulnier still retains from Maurras, however, a pessimistic view of man, of an unchanging human nature, which leads him to look to an *élite* to forestall a revolution; and the notion of a precious classical culture, a very literary culture, which is threatened by proletarian revolution.

Above all, Maulnier would preserve the moral and esthetic values of that culture. He therefore would dissociate and salvage these values from the capitalist system, under which they have somehow persisted. He rejects the solution that Marxism proposes and its fatal linking of culture to the economic structure. Gaëtan Picon says of Maulnier that his political position, though vague in program, is now primarily "one of defense of moral and cultural values": "lui aussi défend l'homme contre l'Histoire" (*Panorama de la nouvelle littérature française* [Paris, 1953], p. 245).

In literary matters Maulnier is more moderate and leans more to the esthetic than Benda or Sartre. While he has been termed a classicist (Picon, p. 244), his conception of literature shows the influence of Hegel and Bergson, and of the symbolists and surrealists. Classicist or not, he is not of Benda's rationalist variety; in fact, ambiguity, surprise, wonder, and even "magic" are vital ingredients in Maulnier's literary formula. Unlike Benda, too, he holds modern literature in high esteem.

8. Claude Roy, "Descriptions critiques: Thierry Maulnier," *Poésie* 47, No. 36 (1947), pp. 8-25. Roy, on the staff of *Les Lettres Françaises*, was also a young Maurrasist and is now undoubtedly a more orthodox Marxist than Maulnier.

9. Maulnier, "Réponse à Julien Benda," *La Nef*, No. 12 (1945), pp. 48-54. For Maulnier Benda's rationalism sometimes becomes tautological: i.e., he reproaches literature for being too literary.

Maulnier's views on "participation" are implicit in his criticism of French poets. The poet should give voice to the emotions and aspirations of his people. He should look to its peculiar genius, its traditions and its folklore. Maulnier blames French poets for not doing in the past the very thing Benda accuses them of now doing, of exploiting national feelings, of serving as spokesmen for the French people as such. Maulnier says of France: "Il lui a manqué précisément ces poètes qui, un moment au moins, prennent la responsabilité de la nation entière et se font la voix même de leur patrie, comme Kipling ou d'Annunzio" (*Introduction à la poésie française* [Paris, 1939], pp. 34-40). Note that these are men Benda indicted.

France's great poets have always sought "purity," but Maulnier's use of this term is different from Benda's though it does mean a form of detachment. What Maulnier sees as disqualified by this quest for purity are the raw materials of life not already refined and sanctified by literary usage. French poetry has little contact with the soul of France, with its familiar landscapes, with its historic or daily struggles. Maulnier objects to this exclusiveness and calls for a more inclusive poetry.

In order to resolve the most important issues raised, the areas of agreement among the three critics should first be outlined. This will make clearer the chief questions remaining unanswered by Benda and Sartre, both of whose approaches seem inadequate—especially beside that of Maulnier, whose reply to Sartre will be seen to answer these questions.

Benda stipulated that a *clerc* may enter into action if it is for some universal principle. Since the most fundamental principles of the existentialist are freedom and justice, both of which fill Benda's prescription of universality, he and Sartre seem to agree basically here, despite the apparent antithesis of the programs with which they are often associated, i.e., detachment versus *engagement*. Moreover they both claim democracy as a universal principle. But Sartre finds his universal principles bound up in every cause or conflict, however local or topical, whereas Benda usually sees these as manifestations or clashes of particularist or special interests. Accordingly we find Sartre committed to socialism as well as democracy, while Benda regards the causes of both bourgeoisie and proletariat as particularist. Because of this, though he thinks certain of the Marxist ends do embody his universal principles, and because the Communists are not so punctilious as he about methods, Benda has criticized these leftists almost as frequently as he has the rightists. Sartre, however, has grown increasingly less critical of Communists in the hope of strengthening the entire Left.<sup>10</sup>

Just as Benda stipulated that the *clerc* may on occasion descend into the arena, Maulnier, in response to Sartre's example of Zola and Dreyfus, agrees that injustice and oppression are the affair of everyone. But, says

10. See his preface to *Les Temps Modernes*, Nos. 112-13 (1955); Maulnier, "Le Théâtre: Nekrassov," *Revue de Paris*, VII (juillet 1955), 152-55.

Maulnier, the intervention of the writer in history "weighs on history" with precisely the weight of his works—written for other than immediate ends. Because he is not immersed in the everyday world, the public lends him special attention, for he acquires non-partisan status, and his wrenching himself from his transcendent concerns imputes a certain enormity to the scandal ("La Littérature est-elle justifiable?" *L'Arche*, III, 97).

Benda and Maulnier, then, seem agreed that the writer can be most effective in his contemporary intervention if he has maintained his non-partisan status, and, of course, attained some prestige as a writer in the first place. Still, one may interpose, he can leave his mark on the centuries only if he is a genius to begin with. That is, to the man who has talent only, one might say, "What are you saving it for?" Perhaps then, there is a kind of division of labor which ought to and does actually tend to take place. Writers of genius, of whom there are too few, should perhaps preserve their genius for universal problems, including the occasional intervention on transcendent issues. As Maulnier has remarked, French genius does confine itself mainly to such problems. Writers of talent, of whom there are too many, should devote their talents to immediate problems—though these men should be guided by the transcendent principles of freedom and justice that all three critics agree upon. The topical issues should not be left entirely at the mercy of the special interests. Such a "division of labor" would constitute a partial concession to Sartre's demands.

Since, however, most topical issues do involve special interests (as Benda fears) along with abstract principles (as Sartre insists), there is always the chance that the writer will be lending himself to some interest. This is simply one of the hazards of action. Worthwhile action probably always incurs some danger or contamination. Maulnier suggests how such hazards can be minimized, even in dealing, as Sartre proposes, with these immediate issues of one's times.

Maulnier tries to underline at what point Sartre's proposal is solidly founded. He agrees with the demonstration of the errors of the analytic mind applied to the complex social reality. The part can be explained only by the whole; the individual is only an abstraction.<sup>11</sup> Maulnier admits too that the choice proposed to the writer is not to reject or accept the events of his times, but either to submit to them or dominate them through deliberate action. But he also agrees with the writers who say that while they will perform their duties as citizens, they do not want their art regimented to serve a political creed. He submits, however, that it *is* possible

11. Maulnier, "La Littérature est-elle justifiable?" *L'Arche*, III, 93. This is a welcome antidote to the too easy and atomistic nominalist conclusion that the only reality is the concrete particular, all else being vague abstractions. It may be that both sides are right in what they say about the weakness of the opposing approach, that both the individual and the group, insofar as we can grasp them, are abstractions.

to act deliberately upon one's period without being regimented. To accept the responsibility of one's situation is not to abolish the function of literature by making of it a political institution, but rather to protect it against the cult which, to keep it pure, desires that it mean nothing and commit itself to nothing. All literature is communication, insists Maulnier. In order to obey Sartre's exhortation the writer need not even treat contemporary subjects; it is only necessary that his period discover "an echo to its appeals, a confirmation given to its convictions or its doubts, a path to its hopes." Maulnier grants that political slavery would even then be possible, but he considers it an avoidable danger which he thinks Sartre himself judges it a writer's duty to combat.

Maulnier concludes that one who "embraces his period closely" can escape political servitude; but such a writer limits his perspectives; he renounces that ambiguity which locates his function both within and beyond history. He is not to isolate himself from his period, this being impossible, nor to embrace it but rather to see beyond it.

Maulnier sees what the writer must do to create great literature in the first place, if he is ever to have any influence to wield. After all, before one can start flailing the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, one must first catch an ass. For when the problem of how the writer can be most effective politically or morally has been threshed out, there still remains the problem, which Benda and Sartre leave unsolved, of how the writer can be most successful from an esthetic or literary standpoint.

Benda sees the function of the writer as primarily contemplative, spiritual, and moral. He is to present the world objectively, with a view to making the reader a wiser, perhaps a nobler man, but one who at least sees clearly; Sartre believes, however, that he can combine the spiritual and the active sides of man—in fact, achieve and define the spiritual man through social action. Benda emphasizes social detachment but intellectual commitment and precise definition, while Sartre emphasizes decisive and self-defining action, practical and social commitment. "Over-emphasize" would really be a better word for both; for Benda's conception of the function of the literary artist suffers from a rationalistic bias (and from his "romantic view of critical detachment") and it is questionable whether he even sees clearly, while Sartre's suffers from his very social and ethical approach. Neither gives enough attention to the esthetic component. It is true that Sartre contemplates a kind of estheticism, because the imagination and art epitomize freedom, but his ideal esthete has remarkably strong ethical and social preoccupations.

Benda and Sartre, because of their antithetical approaches, tend to destroy each other's positions. For Benda reality and values, both moral and esthetic, are reducible to rational terms; for Sartre reality is absurd but man creates and introduces values. Because each has a *univocal* approach to art, Benda judging it largely on its rationality and Sartre on the

basis of its social ethics and utility, each tends even to undermine his own position, thus revealing the need for a more inclusive literary theory. By "inclusive," I mean to suggest that literature is compounded of feelings, values, and ideas, among other things, and cannot be judged by one simple criterion. Through a kind of Hegelian synthesis Maulnier achieves such an inclusive theory, in part because of his notion of the writer's *equivocal* or ambiguous role.

Maulnier develops his literary theory in the course of answering Sartre. In contrast to his "practical" or politic reason for the writer's detachment in the interest of present-day social and moral effectiveness, Maulnier here gives a more esthetic reason, in long-range terms. He thinks that Sartre is doing the writer a disservice by dissuading him from writing for future centuries. He agrees with Sartre that "posterity" is often a convenient and pretentious excuse for writers but asks whether a writer should not prepare to be judged in this perspective as he judges his predecessors. Unlike a human life or any historic "gesture," the literary work has its own way of entering into history and fixing itself there. It endures not only through its memory and its consequences, but also through itself ("La Littérature est-elle justifiable?" *L'Arche*, III, 97).

He grants that the great problems are, like man himself, in a situation; they are posed only through particular circumstances and hence differently for each period; but in any event, Maulnier reminds us, they are posed differently for every man. What one calls the eternal values are in each period to be taken up once more by the writer and given their meaning in a perpetual reinvention. In turn, each period animates his work with a new meaning, for Maulnier concedes to Sartre that the judgment of posterity is always founded on a misunderstanding, *Hamlet* not being for us what it was to its contemporaries. But, continues Maulnier, there was misunderstanding even in its own time, for misunderstanding begins with human communication itself. He grants Sartre that the writer cannot dictate to posterity its judgment, but contends that the writer must be resigned to starting a series of unforeseeable consequences. Maulnier accedes to Sartre's opposing the absolute of the man to the relativity of the work and to Sartre's assertion that a man's death removes him from all possibility of change, while a philosophy like Cartesianism wanders through the centuries, each man finding what he puts into it.<sup>12</sup> Maulnier notes, however,

12. Sartre has been exploiting the ambiguity of the word absolute (see "Présentation," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 1 [1945], p. 7). Although "absolute" is frequently used as a synonym for "universal" he makes it designate the particular, which resembles a constant in mathematics as contrasted with a variable. Just as a constant has a definite value, each man is unique and exists at a particular time and place. Note also that the variable in mathematics is the more abstract term, and this emphasizes Sartre's inversion when we remember that it is the abstraction which is usually associated with the universal and the absolute.

that through the work, with its relativity, Descartes has escaped annihilation and has had a dual existence.

The writer then should resign himself to his ambiguous situation in society, to a certain misunderstanding and a bad conscience. As long as he regards himself in the exclusive perspective of his period, he will be a parasite, receiving more from the past than he gives to the future. "Consumer" that he seems, he may yet return to mankind even more than he receives, but only circuitously and over an inestimable period.

Maulnier grants that every literary work is in some way determined and nourished by history and then inserted into history, which it affects in turn, but he insists that it also extends beyond history insofar as the work is an *end*, and that it proposes itself to the contemplation of the reader as an *end*, even if the author has intended it only as a *means* of acting within history. In fact it is this property of transcending its historical situation and consequences which constitutes its literary character. Maulnier declares that Sartre has missed the inherent ambiguity of the literary work, which is historically enmeshed yet has a certain timeless autonomy and a transcendent essence ("Jean-Paul Sartre et le suicide de la littérature," *La Table Ronde*, I [février 1948], 208).

Sartre, similarly, has ignored the ambiguity of literary language, which serves as both means and end. Maulnier says that Sartre distinguishes artificially between literature and the other arts, which are characterized by Sartre as proposing objects for contemplation and enjoyment residing in their material elements, while literature invites us to pass through the words used, to go direct to the things signified. As if, Maulnier objects, literature did not also propose language as object, combinations of words treated by the author and by the reader as ends. He suggests that Sartre was aware of this objection, but found no better means to escape it than to exclude poetry from literature. Maulnier continues: "Comme si, dans la poésie, les mots n'étaient pas signes en même temps que choses; comme si, dans la prose, ils n'étaient pas choses en même temps que signes. Comme s'il y avait une ligne de partage absolue entre la poésie et la prose, comme si la poésie n'était pas pleine de 'prose,' la prose pleine de 'poésie,' comme s'il y avait une façon de traiter les mots comme opaques, et une autre façon de les traiter comme transparents, alors qu'en réalité ils sont, en poésie comme en prose, et à des degrés divers, translucides, en même temps sens et valeur, en même temps fins et moyens" (p. 204).

If one cannot distinguish absolutely between poetry and prose, nor equate all literature with prose, neither can one, as does Sartre, equate all prose with that of M. Jourdain calling for his slippers. Maulnier concludes that Sartre's utilitarian definition of literature excludes precisely everything which is literature. For Maulnier it is every linguistic product escaping mere "historicity" and "practicality," escaping to any degree the bare necessities

of instrumental action, or revealing in an object some aspect other than instrumental ones.

Having seen Maulnier's relating of poetry to prose, we may again see his use of the principle of ambiguity in explaining the internal functioning of poetry. Moreover, since he tends to equate the literary essence with the poetic, an understanding of his poetic theory is especially necessary to understand his conception of the writer's function. Maulnier, in his *Introduction à la poésie française*, first reminds us that of all things the essence of poetry is most difficult to grasp, and since it rests in the ineffable, it tends to vanish in explicitness. Having indicated the impossibility of defining poetry, he then sets about doing so. In defense of this apparent inconsistency, he might hold that all his definitions of poetry include an undefined element, the term *mystery* or its equivalent.

The poles to be united in art are not so much content and form; rather, the fleeting, fluid materials of experience, vs. the relatively stable and well defined materials of the artist: stone, colors, words. Every art synthesizes the poles of movement and immobility, of richness and rigor. The *équivocité vitale* of poetry embraces poles comparable to those of Maulnier's first definition, in that one pole of this "ambiguity" is definitely ordered and static, and the other is not. They are the poles of the explainable and the inexplicable (the miraculous or mysterious). The explainable is conveyed by the poet's using the logical, descriptive power of words, the inexplicable by his using their magical, incantatory power of evoking sensations and emotions. He is under a double restraint, this being in fact the essence of poetry. He must sacrifice neither the magical power of the word to its customary meanings, nor the converse; for poetry is a dialectic between two realms (*Introduction*, p. 15). The magical realm is not, as the surrealist thinks, limited to the subconscious, but more nearly it surrounds our daily life.

Through its evocative powers poetry calls up a more comprehensive reality and thus may be considered a superior form of knowledge (p. 24). Maulnier seems to think there is in things a discoverable essence which the artist can best discern. The poet is to recreate language through words which are not utilitarian or prudential, which will designate objects so as to make the soul experience them, not merely in the qualities that we can see, utilize or fear, but "in the mystery of their substance, of their cosmic sources and consequences" (p. 57).

Whether or not one can go all the way with Maulnier's metaphysics, to discover the very essence and cosmic sources of things through poetry, his notion of the ambiguous functioning of poetry seems more fruitful than the "poetics" of Sartre and Benda. That is, because of their special pre-occupations, Sartre and Benda end with almost completely different conclusions on the writer's rôle and there are extreme difficulties in both viewpoints, not the least of which is that neither critic knows quite what to do

with poetry: Sartre because of its lack of referential meaning and political utility, Benda because whatever meaning it may have is not rational and objective enough and because of its insistence on dealing with emotions and sensation. Both critics exempt the poet from the need to dedicate himself to any moral or social program and grant to him, with reservations, an expressive rather than descriptive or rhetorical function. They agree to this extent but are able to fit poetry into their general theses only after much backing and filling.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up: on the subject of participation all three agree that certain outrageous situations call for intervention. But Benda and Maulnier agree to it only when some transcendent principle is being violated so flagrantly that any partisan interests are overshadowed. Where, however, partisan causes clearly predominate over the transcendent principles at stake, Sartre would still insist on the writer's taking a stand, while Benda and Maulnier would prefer that he remain non-partisan.

Respecting certain situations (usually lying between the two extremes) which embody particularist allegiances, e.g., national or class loyalties, and often, transcendent principles as well, Benda and Maulnier would disagree. Benda, with his univocal approach wants complete detachment or at most, grudgingly grants the right to poets to express such "particularist passions," just, one might almost say, as a matter of record, while Maulnier, with his approach stemming from the idea of the writer's equivoval role, sees a way in which a writer can participate in the daily life of the nation without becoming a mere mouthpiece for political programs. His participation will be more of a dramatic, esthetic, and moral one—so that he may become a spokesman for his people.

Underlying divergent religious beliefs and political programs, usually explicit and expressed frequently in oversimplified abstractions, there seem to be certain fundamental values (both moral and esthetic), complex tendencies and responses, in which there is widespread concurrence or community, sometimes unconscious or at least unvoiced; this is why perhaps esthetic communication is possible between people of differing beliefs. All three critics agree that the writer's materials include moral values; but this does not mean that the primary purpose of a literary work is to moralize any more than the fact that a poem incorporates beliefs, feelings, or grammatical rules would indicate that its main purpose is to

13. Even Maulnier's conception of poetry has a curious blind spot which may be a reflection of his neo-classical leanings (cf. the neo-classical tag: "Le moi est haïssable"), i.e., his singular lack of recognition of the subjective pole. Although in discussing literature in general terms he speaks of voicing the feelings and aspirations of the people, as a people, when he elaborates his poetic, he seems to slight the expressive function of poetry, its potentiality for conveying subjective experience and attitudes. Though he emphasizes the evocative power of language it is with respect to communicating the mystery in *things*, in the external universe. Benda even attacks poetry that would convey subjective reality *per se*. This lack of appreciation of the expressive aspect of literature is one of the most remarkable features in all three critics.

indoctrinate, to sentimentalize, or to teach grammar. This last qualification would fit Maulnier, but Sartre leans toward indoctrination and Benda toward didacticism.

Maulnier's principle of ambiguity, in his poetic, obviates the choice between the irrational and reason that Benda would impose on us. Similarly, because Maulnier sees words and literary works operating ambiguously as both ends and means, he has resolved the antitheses posited by Sartre: words as things vs. words as symbols, poetry vs. prose, isolation vs. commitment. By the same token, he has reconciled the seemingly opposed goals of Benda and Sartre, namely, transcendence and participation.

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## REVIEWS

*Estudios literarios sobre mística española.* Por Helmut Hatzfeld. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1955. Pp. 405.

The present volume consists of nine monographic studies, ranging in length from 8 to 111 pages, preceded by a prologue and an introductory chapter. Eight of the nine studies have been published previously (for convenient reference I indicate their present chapter numbers): II, "The Influence of Ramon Lull and Jan van Ruysbroeck on the Language of the Spanish Mystics," *Traditio*, IV (1946), 337-97; III, "El Estilo nacional en los símiles de los místicos españoles y franceses," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, I (1947), 43-77; IV, "Two Types of Mystical Poetry, Illustrated by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross," *The American Benedictine Review*, I (1950), 421-63; V, "Klassische Frauenmystik in Spanien und Frankreich: religiöse Erfahrung und sprachliche Leistung bei Santa Teresa de Jesús und der Ursuline Marie de l'Incarnation," *Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft*, VII (1938), 233-57; VI, "Textos teresianos aplicados a la interpretación de El Greco," *Clavileño*, I (1950); VII, "Mysteriennähe und Mysterienferne (San Juan de la Cruz und Malón de Chaide)," *Vom christlichen Mysterium [...] zum Gedächtnis von Odo Casel, O.S.B.* (Düsseldorf, 1951), 303-14; VIII, "Las Profundas cavernas: the Structure of a Symbol of San Juan de la Cruz," *Quaderni Ibero-American*, II (1952), 171-74; and IX, "La Prosa de San Juan de la Cruz en la Llama de amor viva," *Clavileño*, III (1952). The hitherto unpublished study (chapter X) is entitled "Paul Valéry descubre a San Juan de la Cruz."

Chapter I, written later than these studies, is in a sense a conclusion drawn from over twenty years of work on the Spanish mystics, as well as an introduction to this collection of articles. It is entitled "Problemas fundamentales del misticismo español," and in it are raised the following questions: "¿qué es misticismo?; ¿qué relación hay entre misticismo, poesía y poesía mística?; ¿por qué el misticismo español es el misticismo clásico?; ¿qué relación media entre los escritores ascéticos y místicos del *siglo de oro*?; ¿cómo nació el misticismo español?; ¿tuvo el misticismo español alguna prolongación?; ¿en qué consiste el simbolismo místico?" (p. 12). Since these questions are treated in fewer than twenty pages altogether, it would obviously be impossible to give here a summary of this whole chapter; at least two of Professor Hatzfeld's premises should, however, be pointed out.

He is concerned exclusively with "el misticismo ortodoxo católico, es decir, un misticismo que en sus afirmaciones relativas a lo sobrenatural y a la perfección de la vida cristiana está plenamente de acuerdo con las enseñanzas de la Iglesia y esclarece su doctrina" (p. 7). It is presumably, therefore, this ecclesiastical criterion which he has in mind when he writes: "Al crítico literario incumbe la tarea de distinguir estos raros poemas místi-

cos [...] de cualquier otra clase de poesía pseudomística, cósmica, romántica, pura, y especialmente de la poesía amorosa" (pp. 15-16). It may reasonably be maintained, it seems to me, that such distinctions are primarily theological and biographical and cannot therefore properly be made by the literary critic *qua* literary critic: he is not, like the Church, an agent either of canonization or of anathematization. "No es siempre tarea fácil, por la razón de que *la misma poesía genuinamente mística* [my italics] ofrece a su vez dos desviaciones. Una consiste en la poesía mística empática, manierista, escrita por buenos poetas que no han tenido personalmente ninguna experiencia mística, pero que saben de teología mística y moldean sus poemas conformes a esos conocimientos [...] Ejemplo de esto lo tenemos en Luis de León. La otra desviación consiste en aquella clase de poesía proveniente de un místico con auténtica experiencia, pero carente de aptitud poética[...] Nos ofrece un ejemplo de esto Santa Teresa en cuanto poetisa" (p. 16).

Professor Hatzfeld further asserts, in his introduction, the essentially historical nature of literary criticism: "Como quiera que el crítico literario es antes que nada historiador de la literatura, debe distinguir entre símbolos imitados y derivados de fuentes anteriores, y símbolos creados por cada escritor particular; símbolos verdaderos y símbolos didácticos" (p. 28). He distinguishes in this way the historical critic from the Jungian critic, who is interested in archetypal symbols regardless of their immediate sources. "Por su parte, el historiador no arranca nunca de este presupuesto, antes bien, busca primeramente las veces que ocurre un símbolo en la literatura anterior y, en parte a base de este hecho y en parte a base de motivos estéticos particulares, decide si se encuentra ante un procedimiento didáctico-metáforico, construido alegóricamente, o ante una visualización ingeniosa por medio de imágenes. Sólo gracias a este proceso de eliminación logrará quedarse con un reducido número de símbolos-vestiduras arquetípicos, que representan en el nivel más alto un conjunto de imágenes del artista místico evocativo o descriptivo y que tienen valor estético" (pp. 28-29). And so he defines his aim: "De esta manera el simbolismo parece formar la entraña misma de la cuestión mística y él se lleva la parte principal de los artículos siguientes, en los que he procurado atacar el problema principalmente sobre una base histórica y comparativa [...] El simbolismo, pues, como fenómeno estilístico, es el principio unificador de todos los escritos místicos. En el estilo radica, según eso, la última *raison d'être* de estos estudios" (pp. 30-31).

In chapter II Professor Hatzfeld is concerned primarily with sources. Discarding the approaches of Baruzi, Etchegoyen, and Dámaso Alonso (which he labels "tesis [...] ahistorical, synthetic, secular" respectively), he states, "Sobre la base de las aportaciones logradas por Asín Palacios y Pierre Grout [...] , he procurado en este trabajo conciliar la tesis árabe con la tesis germana" (pp. 142-43). He chooses Lull, "el sufi franciscano," as

the Arabic source *par excellence* (Is it to strengthen this thesis that he makes the debatable assertion that "Lulio no aprendió nunca latín"? ) and Van Ruysbroeck as the Germanic source. He then presents evidence for the derivation from Lull of such important concepts and symbols, in the Spanish mystics, as "ciencia de amor," "amor desinteresado" as presented in the *Soneto a Cristo crucificado*, and the "ñudo" of the *unio mystica*. Van Ruysbroeck, on the other hand, is given credit for "los adornos nupciales del alma," "el toque espiritual," and assorted "metáforas [...] relativas a la unión divina y a la vida del Espíritu Santo en el alma." More interesting than these, however, is a central group of symbols which Professor Hatzfeld finds in part derived from Lull and in part from Van Ruysbroeck: "la fuente," "el cazador," and the combination of "noche oscura" and "desnudez." Regardless of their sources, the rich complexity of these symbols is brought out admirably by the author's analyses, which I shall not attempt to summarize here; in fact, it seems regrettable that his predominant concern with trying to establish historical sources tends actually to obscure the real value of his structural analyses.

In chapter II, the two individual authors were considered as "outside" (from the chronological, the geographic, and the linguistic points of view) sources for the language of the Spanish mystics, a non-individualized group of seven authors. In chapter III, the terms of comparison are even more general: it is assumed that the Spanish mystics and the French mystics have collective national styles which may be compared on the basis of similes alone. "Si distintos escritores, en efecto, procuran describir un mismo fenómeno, necesariamente resultará un estilo colectivo, dentro de un determinado terreno" (p. 145). In this case, the differences in collective styles will be ones of *Volksgeist* and not of *Zeitgeist*: "Si hay diferencias deben ser más nacionales que de época, porque los místicos españoles tardíos y los primeros franceses coinciden cronológicamente" (pp. 147-48). Although Professor Hatzfeld is dealing with attempts to convey, in two different languages, very complex and hard-to-define spiritual experiences, he further assumes that this comparison may be made essentially in terms of *Wörter und Sachen*. He takes "la pasividad mística" to be the basic "thing" and subdivides it into five "aspectos": "meditación y contemplación," "preparativos para la contemplación," "efecto de la contemplación infusa: quietud," "purgaciones pasivas," and "unio mystica." Under each of these headings he has gathered two groups of similes, labelled "España" and "Francia". These groups, and the "Resumen y conclusión" in which they are summarized, make fascinating reading; the intrinsic power of the similes, metaphors, analogies, and other figures thus collated, outweighs the occasionally obscure or debatable character of Professor Hatzfeld's premises, implicit in such statements as: "El pueblo de los autos de fe y de la imaginación siniestra no escatima horrores para describir la purificadora noche oscura de esos sufrimientos. Pero el espíritu de la Reconquista, con

su comprensión intuitiva del sufrimiento, pone esperanza en la desesperación" (p. 199).

Chapter IV is concerned with the comparison, not of national styles, but of two concrete poems, the *glosas* written by Santa Teresa and by San Juan on the *letrilla* beginning "Vivo sin vivir en mí." The vast historicico-ideological problem of *poesía a lo divino* is left to Professor Wardropper (see page 209; but our author does attempt here an historical synopsis beginning, "Sabemos, al menos, que los místicos medievales transmitieron el tema de la muerte de amor no correspondido a los trovadores cortesanos [...]"), an assertion which is not supported by Etienne Gilson, *La Théologie mystique de Saint Bernard* [Paris, 1934], p. 212). A textual analysis and comparison of these two poems would seem to offer great possibilities. Yet, for some reason which Professor Hatzfeld does not explain, the objects analyzed and compared are not the two poems, which are consistently ignored as the basic structural units, but rather a series of stanzas taken alternately from the two poems. (The reason for this approach is not that he considers one *glosa* directly related to the other: despite their first lines, "Vivo ya fuera de mí" and "En mí yo no vivo ya," he says "[...] fué mera casualidad el que [los dos poetas] coincidieran en ésta [letrilla] tan de cerca"). After each of the eight pairs of arbitrarily juxtaposed *disjecta membra* has been examined, a conclusion is drawn. At the end of the study a general conclusion is drawn in the form of a list of twenty-one pairs of contrasting adjectives, the adjectives in each pair corresponding to Santa Teresa and San Juan respectively: "embriagado—sobrio, elocuente—factual, optimista—pesimista," etc. Professor Hatzfeld finds his list surprisingly similar to one constructed by the graphologist Suzanne Bressard in her "Comparaison entre l'écriture de St. Jean de la Croix et celle de Ste. Thérèse d'Avila."

In chapters V, VI, and VII we see further applications of Professor Hatzfeld's by now familiar method of comparison. In the first article, Santa Teresa and the Vénérable Marie de l'Incarnation are chosen as ideal case-studies: "Esta lucha lingüística con lo inefable místico es principalmente instructiva, cuando diversas mujeres, agraciadas con las más altas experiencias místicas, al propio tiempo dotadas en alto grado de serena y crítica objetividad, y alojadas en distintas circunstancias de nación, cultura, vida y formación, tratan de exteriorizar con ayuda de la lengua materna los mismos estados y situaciones religiosas de la manera más apropiada" (p. 254). But can we assume that these two individuals experienced "los mismos estados y situaciones religiosas"? It is not only the secular psychologist who would raise this question. Thomas Aquinas writes: "Possible est igitur quod unus Deum videntium perfectius alio videat, quamvis uterque videat ejus substantiam" (*Contra Gentiles*, lib. III, cap. LVIII). Nevertheless, after summary comparisons of the respective *races*, *moments*, biographies, and educations of the two mystics, Professor Hatzfeld pro-

ceeds, as in chapter III, to compare their different accounts of the "same" levels of experience. We see at the end of the study that the "contemplative" Santa Teresa is concerned primarily with conveying *el cómo* (psychological) and the "discursive" Marie de l'Incarnation with conveying *el qué* (metaphysical). In chapter VI the terms of comparison are nine famous El Greco paintings and certain passages of Santa Teresa, taken chiefly from *El Libro de su vida*. Though not absolutely sure that El Greco used Santa Teresa as a source ("Sería ciertamente satisfactorio saber, en definitivo, si El Greco conoció alguna vez a Santa Teresa o leyó sus escritos"), the author believes that his comparisons "constituyen el primer apoyo detallado de la tesis de que el arte del cretense fué influído por la gran mística y visionaria de Avila, su contemporánea" (p. 327). Such a thesis is not unreasonable; but the true value of this chapter depends again, not on its validity as a source-study, but on its frequently illuminating analyses and explications: "En todo caso, la Santa puede aportar valiosos elementos a la interpretación de los cuadros de El Greco en determinados puntos, que han sido totalmente pasados por alto por los modernos historiadores del arte" (p. 328). Finally, the comparison of San Juan and Malón de Chaide resembles in its purpose the comparison, in chapter IV, of San Juan and Santa Teresa: in the one case, Professor Hatzfeld was attempting to define two basic types of mystical poetry, and in the other he is defining two basic styles of religious expression and/or experience, "Mysteriennähe" and "Mysterienferne." Frequently he seems absolutely to condemn Malón de Chaide: "Retórica alegórica frente a sustancia simbólica son, en definitiva, términos equivalentes a incomprensión o comprensión de un problema" (p. 340). While San Juan urges one to go beyond *imaginatio* as quickly as possible, Malón de Chaide, like Ignatius of Loyola, develops it "hasta el límite máximo con ayuda de todos los medios de la fantasía creadora" (p. 344). Professor Hatzfeld relates the contrast between these two religious authors, writing circa 1570-84 and circa 1592 respectively, to an historical "shift of sensibility": "comprobamos cómo en un típico momento crucial de la literatura espiritual se hunde en España el Renacimiento, todo discurso y razón, y hace su aparición el Barroco, todo impetu y fantasía" (p. 348). (It is, as he no doubt realizes, not quite just to the religious literature of the Baroque in general to see it typified in an author like Malón de Chaide; the Ignatian phantasy of the English metaphysicals, who drew heavily on Spanish religious authors other than San Juan, has recently been well defined and analyzed, both historically and critically, by Professor Louis Martz in his *Poetry of Meditation*.)

San Juan is also the main topic of the briefer chapters VIII, IX, and X. First, we are given a theological and historical explication of "las profundas cavernas" (stanza 3 of *La Llama de amor viva*), partially in terms of the Song of Solomon, but chiefly in terms of a figure of Van Ruysbroeck. Next, the author sketches in some detail a model for the full-scale analysis of

San Juan's prose by analyzing the prose of *La Llama de amor viva* and by tracing the rhetorical forms deriving from the Bible and the liturgy; what he values most highly is the perfect classical balance of the popular and the learned elements. Finally, he notes the impact that the writings of San Juan had, in 1943, on Paul Valéry and comments very perceptively upon this in the light of Valéry's "tragedia espiritual," his deliberate rejection of Grace.

It is quite difficult, in conclusion, to evaluate with full justice this collection of studies in Spanish mysticism. Professor Hatzfeld is vastly erudite and thus is able to reveal many previously unknown currents of influence. He is also a learned expicator and analyst of the mystics' symbolic language. His own vital relationship to the Catholic tradition and, especially, his profound appreciation for San Juan qualify him eminently from the empathetic point of view. Yet is there not at times a certain mechanical rigidity of approach and attitude which causes his studies to fall short of the ideal? In his scholarship it seems that there is little meaningful relationship between religious, literary, and historical evaluations. As was seen in his introduction, historical "originality" seems to mean to Professor Hatzfeld something like moral and esthetic "authenticity"; and, unlike Professor Wimsatt ("Poetry and Morals: A Relation Reargued," *Thought*, XXIII, 1948), he would apparently equate moral and esthetic values: "[...] parece resultar evidente que existe relación entre la pureza moral y estética. Paul Valéry no logra crear una poesía tan pura estéticamente como la de San Juan de la Cruz, porque el poeta francés no puede menos de bucear en los elementos que arrastran su alma no purificada" (pp. 394-95). Does this explain his antipathy for a major Spanish poet whom he repeatedly anathematizes as "académico," "manierista," "poco sincero," "el tardío filólogo erasmista y pseudomístico agustino, Luis de Léon" (pp. 211, 250, et passim)? Such an attitude could certainly be criticized as excessively "excluyente." Yet, despite these apparent shortcomings, the present volume makes readily accessible a group of articles which will have enduring reference value for the student of Spanish mysticism.

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*The French Biblical Epic in the Seventeenth Century.* By R. A. Sayce. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955. Pp. 278.

French heroic poems of the seventeenth century afford the modern reader but occasional joy and few epic sensations. But they have other claims on our attention, too long minimized, despite the example set by Julien Duchesne, Raymond Toinet, and Ralph C. Williams. They had their importance three centuries ago, and the very *Moyse sauvé* of Saint-Amant, lampooned by Boileau, knew a certain popularity and exerted influence. The epic, in literary theory, was the supreme genre. It tempted and exercised

the pens of numerous writers, in works which came chiefly in two large waves of nearly fifty each, at the beginning and in the third quarter of the century. It is a sizable field, still wide open to investigation.

Adopting a rather special approach, Professor Sayce has isolated the poems dedicated to Biblical subjects, and examined them very much as if they constituted a literary species in themselves. The experiment is conducted with erudition, and all the machinery that would be set in motion for the study of a formidable genre. Numerous questions of origin and influence are followed through to the Bible and other sources like Josephus and Philo Judaeus, to the classic epics of Homer and Virgil, to Italy, and to sixteenth-century France, with stress on Du Bartas. The theory of the epic is surveyed, though rather sketchily; the practice of individual poets is analyzed, at times elaborately; religious differences are noted; the general characteristics of various groups are underscored. A systematic order is set up. First, a small body of five poets in the first decade of the century, among whom D'Aubigné and Montchrestien, survivals of earlier times. Then, after an interval of over forty years, Saint-Amant, and until Charles Perrault, who produced his *Adam* in 1697, some ten more, including Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin. The latter group is subdivided into "fundamentalists," dedicated primarily to a religious purpose, and "baroque poets," motivated by literary ambitions. One has the impression of watching a sort of dialectic, in which one of the most interesting interplays is that between "internal expansion," by which poets extended the letter and spirit of the Bible with understanding and fidelity, and "external expansion," by which extraneous and alien refinements were introduced, for effect or adjustment to current taste. Professor Sayce compares these two methods with special skill, and with caution shows that the one was not confined to the "fundamentalist" authors or the other to the "baroque."

The whole experiment shows a strong will for independent revaluation and solid documentation. It rests on a firm bibliography. It grows dry in certain sections that are little more than factual enumeration, as in some accounts of individual poets and in the chapter on "The Epic and the Visual Arts," which is full of information, but like a catalogue. The author's skill in classification has its drawbacks; by distributing his subject matter under many headings, he inevitably is led to reconsider topics repetitiously: allegory, the *merveilleux*, and the structure of the epic especially, in discussions of theory and practice, recur too insistently to sustain interest.

The argument in one major instance leaves us at sea. To be sure, humanism and Christianity were mixed and left unblended in most of the Biblical poems, as indeed in much of seventeenth-century literature; Professor Sayce rightly calls attention to this condition, but takes us by surprise when he maintains (pp. 182-83) that for his authors the pagan *merveilleux* was "the stuff of poetry itself" and, what is more, that "from their education and reading they derived a genuine belief in the gods and heroes

of antiquity"! The demonstration also seems to falter where, like an historian who knows his duty, Professor Sayce outlines the "background," but somewhat as if he were confusedly performing a required chore. Seeking out the "general social and literary conditions" which could explain the "diminution of interest in epic poetry" in general, during the second quarter of the century, he dwells on trends of post-war pacification and tranquillity that might have cut off inspiration for heroic works of scope, but which as it happens developed in the first quarter, after the civil wars and at the very time when, this background notwithstanding, the first large wave of heroic poems did break out. Perhaps this background exerted its influence on writers whom it launched into the second quarter, but though the latter period displays a meager output of heroic verse, it was by no means an unheroic age; other historians tell us, at times with such assurance as to brush aside all proof, that Richelieu's was indeed an age of dashing, dangerous, and indomitable heroism. In a discussion of this second quarter, one is particularly perplexed to find that no recollection of any Cornelian hero springs up to clarify or at least to embarrass the argument.

More fundamentally, and for all the author's skill, unimpaired by these lapses, one may question the nature of the experiment itself. The volume of the subject matter is rather slight to be parceled out in such an intricate laboratory. A score and a half of Biblical poems are rounded up, but with apologies for some that only vaguely can be reckoned epic. Enough remains to interest the literary historian, but it does not appear to be substantial or sustained enough to justify the use of apparatus designed for the study of movements and full-scale genres; the experiment could properly have been more modest. Or better still, to follow a bolder and freer method, the experimenter could have considerably extended his field, which here lies circumscribed, one might say, for the sake of a definition in the service of a thesis. His province is not broadly the religious or the Christian but the Biblical epic, in which he rigorously includes "in the common French sense" only poems based on the Old Testament, leaving out not merely the New Testament but medieval lore, out of which arose poems on Clovis, Charlemagne, Saint Louis, and Jeanne d'Arc. The exclusion of Pierre le Moigne's *Saint Louys ou la Sainte Couronne reconquise*, at least as noteworthy as Saint-Amant's *Moyse sauvé*, especially impoverishes the collection. Professor Sayce does have a point. He wishes to bring out not only the gap between pagan and Christian elements of seventeenth-century heroic poetry but within the latter the distance between the Hebrew Bible and its new representations. A complete study of French seventeenth-century attitudes towards the Old Testament would most certainly be of striking interest, and urgently remains to be done. But the Biblical epic, here set up as a genre, scarcely spreads out to such proportions or assumes such an identity. The genre, if there is any here, is the epic at large. If it is to be a

testing ground for the study of contradictions in Christian poets, their seventeenth-century religion could profitably be compared with the mediæval sources of inspiration, as well as the Hebraic. The test would gain in complexity, unity, and validity.

More than the search for a body of poetry with real unity, what intensely interested Professor Sayce in the epic was no doubt the baroque. On previous occasions, he had already contributed to the widespread and intensive debate on the nature of that important style in literature and the arts, which he takes to be a taste for fantasy, decorative details, distorted and tortured masses, emotion and magnificence; one of its essential marks is "a deep contradiction or conflict." Though the issue has not been settled, this definition has wide support; but as demonstrated here in the Biblical epics, it would be subject to reservations and would need further refining. For example, that many of these poems celebrated Susanna, Judith, and Esther is a fact worth noting; but to propose (p. 245) that this "feminism," a tendency to make "no distinction [...] between masculine and feminine virtues," should be interpreted as "the baroque tendency to break down barriers and mix opposites," however cautiously the suggestion may be made, is to stretch the definition to that point where, ambitiously absorbing everything, it explains nothing with clarity; it is an oversimplification to argue contrapuntally that classicism "vigorously" upheld distinctions, by virtue of "the rule of common sense"—*le bon sens* was not necessarily a routine or conformist common sense. Contradictions, to Professor Sayce, seem almost by their very nature to be charged with tension—a variety of force and energy often considered inherently baroque. He does show an admixture of contradictory or different elements in the poems, but are these automatically in a state of tension? In most cases one does not detect any strain whatever, perhaps because of the poets' literary mediocrity. Expression of real tension requires, in words as in music or the plastic arts, a great mastery of the medium and much experience of the inner life; the one and the other seem to be lacking in most of the works so elaborately probed. These appear to prove rather that a pagan and a Christian *merveilleux*, for instance, may well abide together in contradiction untense, unstrained, acquiesced, and relaxed, when indeed it is not purely an unexamined convention. If that is still baroque, let it be so. If it is a subconscious tension that is implied, that too cannot be known without some sign.

The baroque in all areas will surely continue to challenge the critical imagination, but persuasion may be needed to attract readers to the French seventeenth-century epic in particular. Yet this labor of professional duty needs to be done, and will be appreciated. It is to be hoped that the experiment conducted by Professor Sayce will set off a series of fresh studies.

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*L'Univers poétique de Baudelaire: Symbolisme et symbolique.* Par Lloyd James Austin. Paris: Mercure de France, 1956. Pp. 354.

This is the first panel of a triptych of *Etudes sur les poètes symbolistes français*, the other two of which are to be devoted to Mallarmé and Valéry, on whom Mr. Austin has already done much valuable work. He states frankly in his introduction that his personal preference among the three poets is for Mallarmé, but his treatment of Baudelaire is satisfactorily free from the invidious comparisons that too many devotees of Mallarmé tend to make between their chosen poet and practically all others. Mr. Austin, on the contrary, has an extraordinarily sure understanding and appreciation of Baudelaire's genius.

The "Introduction générale" to the triptych begins by a brief discussion of the relation of the three poets to one another, and their contribution to French poetry, summed up admirably in the phrase, "Chez eux, la poésie cesse d'être un discours pour devenir un sortilège" (p. 11). Then the author goes on to the distinction on which the whole book is constructed, between "la symbolique" and "le symbolisme." "Il s'agit simplement de réserver le terme de 'symbolique' à toute poétique fondée sur la croyance que la nature est le symbole d'une réalité divine ou transcendante, définition entièrement orthodoxe et traditionnelle; et de consacrer le mot de 'symbolisme' à toute poétique qui, sans poser la question d'une transcendance mystique, cherche dans la nature des symboles qui traduisent l'état d'âme du poète" (pp. 19-20). The distinction seems to me a most valuable and illuminating one, and leads straight into the very penetrating analysis of Baudelaire's theory and use of *correspondances* later in the book. The remainder of the general introduction is a stimulating discussion of various problems connected with symbolist poetry; the poet's "message," poetry as a way of knowledge, poetic language, the role of poetry, and the various accusations, of obscurity, of preciousness, of sterility, that have been brought against symbolist poetry.

In the introduction to the Baudelaire panel Mr. Austin begins with the premise that the doctrine of *correspondances* is the center of Baudelaire's poetry and of his poetic doctrine. The question has been treated so often that, as Mr. Austin says, one might well think that there was nothing new to be said about it. But he fully justifies his belief that this is not true; his treatment makes a real contribution to the subject. Baudelaire critics have tended to accept too easily the now almost traditional division of *correspondances* into two categories, the "horizontal" or synesthetic, and the "vertical" or transcendental. Mr. Austin's position is that Baudelaire's basic originality lay in the secularization of a theological or metaphysical doctrine, in the passage from a transcendental "symbolique" to a purely human symbolism.

Following these lines, the book is divided into two main parts, "Symbolique et satanisme" and "Symbolisme." The first, after a brief review of

the "symbolique" tradition, follows Baudelaire's gradual change from the "Correspondances" sonnet, "optimiste, triomphant de ton [ . . ] affirmation du caractère sacré de la Nature" (p. 86) to the discovery that the visible world hides a diabolic reality rather than a divine one, that it is a "reflet de l'Enfer," as in "Alchimie de la douleur" and "Horreur sympathique." This "courbe descendante" is shown in the arrangement of the "Spleen et idéal" section of the *Fleurs du mal*. In Baudelaire's very complex Satanism Satan is "symbole des bas penchants de l'homme; mais symbole aussi de ses élans spirituels" (p. 126). But Baudelaire does not stop here: "il y a autre chose dans les *Fleurs du mal* qu'une symbolique orthodoxe manquée et une symbolique infernale plus réussie: il y a un symbolisme humain, l'expression lyrique d'une âme humaine" (pp. 134-35).

One of my very few reservations about the book is that in this part Mr. Austin seems to me to have over-systematized slightly this itinerary of Baudelaire's in seeing in it quite so direct and simple a progress. I should say that there is more hesitation, more overlapping of the different conceptions; the celestial and the infernal "symbolique" and the human symbolism are interwoven and coexist. This is particularly true of the theory in which Baudelaire's clearest statements of the doctrine of transcendental *correspondances* appear; not in his early writings, but in the *Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe* (1857) and the article on Victor Hugo (1861). Even in the poetry, although our inability to date most of the poems with any degree of certainty makes any categoric statement impossible, I should say that the "human symbolism" is found in a number of what are generally considered the "early poems." But this in no way invalidates Mr. Austin's basic distinctions nor the pre-eminent role of the human *correspondances*.

The second part of the book, "Symbolisme," seems to me wholly admirable. Mr. Austin gives us a backward look at Baudelaire's most important predecessors, whom he finds among the poets rather than among the theologians and philosophers. He notes that while Baudelaire used the words *symbole*, *allégorie* and *emblème* as if they were synonyms there is no doubt that a single conception is behind all of them. "Pour Baudelaire, le symbole n'est plus l'expression d'un rapport fixe et nécessaire entre un objet naturel et la réalité divine qu'il laisse pressentir, comme dans la symbolique médiévale: le symbole est désormais un rapport essentiellement subjectif établi par l'imagination dans son activité créatrice" (p. 172).

In the chapter entitled "La Sensibilité de Baudelaire" Mr. Austin follows Baudelaire's distinction between "la sensibilité du cœur" and "la sensibilité de l'imagination," the former passive, the latter active and creative, moving up from the synesthetic plane to the more significant relations between sensation and sentiment, and finally to those between sensations and ideas. So sensations have a privileged role in Baudelaire's poetry: "Nous verrons que tantôt Baudelaire fait de telle ou telle sensation le point de départ d'une rêverie dont elle détermine la tonalité; que tantôt, au con-

traire, il part d'un sentiment obscur qu'il précise en évoquant des images tirées des divers domaines sensoriels; que souvent, enfin, il crée une sorte de paradis imaginaire où toutes les principales sensations sont réunies, soit dans une simple énumération comme dans le huitième vers du sonnet des *Correspondances*, soit indirectement, en évoquant successivement les impressions des différents sens" (p. 198).

The rest of the chapter is devoted to a most illuminating discussion of a number of poems in which one of the five senses serves as a point of departure. One could cite any number of admirable examples: the analysis of a stanza of the "Voyage à Cythère" (p. 219), of three of the poems inspired by Jeanne Duval (pp. 221-28), of "Les Phares" (pp. 252-57). In connection with the visual sensations Mr. Austin makes the excellent point that many of Baudelaire's so-called "borrowings" are due to the fact that literature and art were among his most fundamental experiences: "Là où un poète plus simple, plus naïf, moins raffiné, réagit surtout à son expérience immédiate de la vie et de la nature, Baudelaire, avec son mépris pour tout ce qui est naturel, ne réagit profondément qu'à ce qui a été déjà élevé du domaine de la nature dans celui de l'art" (p. 240). The function of the imagination is the perception of relationships, above all those between the immediate experience of the poet, whether of life or of art, and his inner situation.

The final chapter, "L'Imagination de Baudelaire," turns to the poems in which the point of departure is not a sensation but "un sentiment ou un état d'âme qu'il s'agit d'extérioriser" (p. 296). Here again, in his treatment of "L'Irrémédiable," the "Spleen" poems, "Le Balcon," "Harmonie du soir," and "Moesta et errabunda," Mr. Austin combines a most convincing demonstration of his central thesis with the most delicate and perceptive poetic sensitivity. The chapter ends with a comparison of "L'Ennemi" with Shakespeare's "That time of year thou mayst in me behold," in both of which "la correspondance entre l'âme du poète et les images qu'il choisit pour l'exprimer est d'une parfaite exactitude" (p. 330).

Mr. Austin's conclusion emphasizes again that Baudelaire's "univers poétique" is above all a human one, his symbol a personal one. For Mr. Austin, Baudelaire's "message" has little importance; for him "la gloire de Baudelaire est d'avoir renouvelé, grâce à la doctrine des correspondances, et à la théorie de l'imagination qui seule lui donnait sa valeur, l'expression poétique" (p. 339). He sums up admirably: "ce qui distingue Baudelaire de ses prédecesseurs romantiques, c'est le caractère dense de sa poésie; grain de parfum aux possibilités d'expansion illimitée, diamant aux rayonnements multiples. Ce qui le distingue de ses successeurs symbolistes, c'est qu'il refuse d'être opaque: s'il reconnaît l'obscurité indispensable, il veut que l'âme jette sa propre lumière surnaturelle sur l'obscurité naturelle des choses" (p. 340).

This book displays a rare combination of erudition, wisdom, and taste.

The author is thoroughly familiar with all previous work of any importance on Baudelaire. He is more than generous in his acknowledgments to his predecessors, and when he disagrees with them he does so with a disarming courtesy. He has a keenness and insight that go to the heart of the problems of symbolism, *correspondances*, *sensibilité* and imagination. And all this is allied with a most sensitive appreciation of poetry. One of the great merits of the book is the way in which Baudelaire's theory and practice are interwoven, so that one is constantly illuminated by the other. Mr. Austin has given us a book which stands out as one of the very best of the countless works on Baudelaire.

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## REVIEWS IN BRIEF

*Répertoire d'incipit de prières en ancien français.* [Compilé par] Jean Sonet. (Société de Publications Romanes et Françaises, no. 54) Genève: Droz, 1956. Pp. xvi + 410. Jean Sonet, already well known to medievalists for his studies on *Barlaam et Josaphat* (for reviews, see the *YWMLS*, XII [1950], 22; XIII [1951], 35), has rendered a signal service by indexing Old French prayers. The index, it is hoped, will incite interest and research in this domain and find collaborators for Sonet's *Recueil général de la prière française médiévale* now in preparation; contributors are invited to submit editions of prayers under their signatures and so contribute to the history of spirituality, hagiography, and liturgy, as well as philology. Ranging from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, these *incipit*, culled from public and private libraries all over Western Europe and the United States, in verse and in prose, repeat, correct, enlarge, and replace such listings in Långfors' *Incipit des poèmes français antérieurs au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Sonet follows, in general, the plan of Långfors: *incipit*, title given in the MSS, list of MSS, existing editions, bibliographical references. Sonet, however, classes the items by the alphabetical order of separate words, regardless of their orthography; indexes each distinct paragraph of the prayers; includes, for *Livres d'Heures*, sixteenth-century references; excludes from the compilation *chansons*, *épilogues*, *commentaires*, and extensive moral or pious tales already the object of particular studies; numbers (1-2374) each item; and provides a table of saints. These departures from Långfors' plan, plus full MS listing instead of reference to Naetebus, and restriction of the compilation to one genre, are distinct advantages over Långfors' work. But inaccuracies in printing and inadequacy of proof-reading do not give us the confidence we may well have in Långfors' work.

Father Sonet is conscious of imperfections in his work, but their number (averaging almost one per page from spot checks only) should caution the user to re-check everything; many are minor and will readily be corrected by any reader, others are indicated below.

Page xiii: Catalogue USA, the cross reference to Seymour de Ricci is lacking. P. xiv: Kervyn de Lettenhove is out of alphabetical order. Add to the bibliography: Meyer, Helene, *Die Predigten in den Miracles de N. D. par personnages*, diss. Berlin, 1911 [*Rom. Forsch.*, XXXI (1912), 706-98]. P. xvi: the editor of *AR* is Bertoni, not Bertoldi. Why refer to Bossuat's *Manuel* for the journals and collections cited? Why should there be lacking so many references to Långfors' *Incipit* as in Nos. 17, 55, 98, 102, 112, 117, 122, 130, 137, 152, 153, etc.? Reference to Långfors is non-existent in Nos. 1728, 2335 and false in Nos. 1099 (read *page 215*), 2289 (*r. page 417*), 2290 (*r. page 419*), 2338 (*r. page 439*), 2347 (*r. page 444*). Omissions from Långfors seem to include: *A la louenge, a l'honneur et au gré . . .* (L., *page 9*), *Dame dieu de grant empris . . .* (L., *page 76*). Out of order are Nos. 57, 128, 224, 389, 476, 477, 534, 565, 827, 895, 918, 942, 1019, 1055, 1302, 1383, 1490, 1495, 1565, 1720, 1812, 1971, 2037, 2127, 2178. Cross references are made to non-existent rubrics: Nos. 65, 193, 1041, 2278. Why were numbers given to the cross references 575, 673 (cf. *page 120*, *Glorieuse mere roïne*), 1275 (cf. *page 100*), and not for similar cases elsewhere? There are no separate listings for the prayers listed in Nos. 1602, 1927.

Miscellaneous errors (the correct reading follows in parentheses): No. 42 *Mediatresse* (*Mediatresse*); 95 *nнатre* (*nature*); 97 *ZFSL*, XXXII (XXXIII); 116 *Neue phil.* (*Neuphil.*); 121 fol. 99 (89); 154 *neite* (*nette*); 217 *joinctes* (*jointes*); 235 *saintisme* (*sainticisme*); 255 *solié* (*folié*); 261 *Ligue* (*Liguge*); 275 *jeta* (*pita*); 277 *touz puissanz* (*tous puissans*); 286 *AR*, XIII (LXIII); 318 *rena* (*rend*); 323 *Naetebus* (*Naetebus*); 357 *Legiloque* (*L'épilogue*); 424 *Rom.*, LXI (XLI); 447 the page no. for *Rom.* is 322; 504 *doux* (*doulx*); 540 the foliation for MS Oxf. Digby 86 is 200<sup>v</sup>; 541 *v. p.* (*v. seynt p.*), *Herrig's Archiv*, XIII (LXIII), *ZFSL*, p. 163 (169); 542 *saint* (*seint*), *Herrig's Archiv*, XIII (LXIII); 597 *voiy* (*voy*); 612 MS Chartres *Esjoy v.* (*Esjoy toy v.*); 613 *escrpt* (*escript*); 638 *crucefij* (*crucefy*); 639 *Aidez* (*Aide*); 641 [e] (delete); 654 *doulec* (delete); 28: page 122 (675); 718 *saint* (*sainte*); 783 *dit I clerc Plantefolié . . . moult long temps* (*dist I clers Plantefoliés . . . mout l. tans*); 832 add: *Naetebus*, type IX; 871 *fouffris* (*souffris grief*); 915 *peren* (*pere* ?); 973 *oraision* (*oraison*); 1033 *enver* (*envers*); 1054 *Esprit* (*Espirit*); 1084 *aiez de mei* (*heiez de moi*); 1100 *fil* (*filz*); 1101 and 1300 *Koutousoff* (*Koutouzoff*); 1113 *defendresse* (*defenderesse*); 1123 *garcieux* (*gracieux*); 1130 *ZRPh*, 391 (396); 1255 *on* (*ou* ?); 1327 (*f)inicion . . . es sanz* (*[f]inicion . . . est sans*); 1330 *d. croix* (*d. croiz*); 1331 and 2308 *Berhardt* (*Bernhardt*); 1393, pt. 12 *mirouer* (*myrouer*); 1408, 1412, 1413 MS B.N. 2246 (2446); 1428 *allegement . . . de vie* (*allegrement . . . vive*); 1432 *aide* (*ayde*); 1433 *reлюisant* (*reлюisante*); 1487 *cielz* (*cieux*); 1518 *eternelle jubilation* (*e. jubilacion*); 1528 *Extr.* (*Réf.*); 1589 *perdurables* (*perdurablez*); 1643 *Rom.*, LXI (XLI); 1700 *de* (delete); 1707 *moul* (*moult*); 1729 MS Bruxelles 2355 (2335); 1748 *on* (delete), *Rom.*, XXXI (XXXVI); 1749 *on* (delete); 1752 *ai nom* (*ai a nom*), add: *quatrainsaabb*; 1768 MS B.M. Roy. II (11); 1784 MS B.M. Roy. (*Roy. 2*), *Archiv.* XCCI (CXXI); 1785 *cf. paradis* (*cf. paraïs*); 1792 *cieux* (*cieus*), I, 371 (I, 342), LXXXVIII (LXXXVII); 1795 *cf. Roine des cielz* (*cf. Roine des cieux*); 1808 Gröber, *Grundriss* (G. G. II'); 1832 *compete* (*complete* ?); 1838 *Commemoration* (*Commemoracion*); 1840 *eslit* (*eslist*); 1847 *fran* (*franc*); 1876 *Doux Dieu doux* (*Doulz Dieu doulz*); 1940 *cf. voyant* (*cf. voyant*); 1949 *Dieu* (*Deu*); 2020 *Consé* (*Condé*); 2047 *Archiv*, p. 32, n°. 52 (p. 92, no. 57); 2076 *Rom.*, XXIV (XXIX); 2083 *Syre* (*Sire*); 2107 *aource* (*aouree*); 2107, pt. 2 *voy* (*fail*); 2117 *glotieuse* (*glorieuse*); 2152 *qur* (*sur*); 2165 *creatuer* (*creature*); 2176 *agardé* (*agarde*); 2202 *Jhesu* (*Jesu*); 2208 *Siegnieur* (*Seigneur*); 2263 *egales et perdurables* (*egalles et pardurablez*); 2293 *Jesus* (*Jhesus*); 2308 *vraiment* (*vraient*); 2336 *election* (*election*); 2342 *Heure Coëtivy* (*Heures Coëtivy*); 2367 *personnes* (*persones*). To the Index (page 410) add Ambroise 700 and Symphorien (last no. for Suzanne). (HARRY F. WILLIAMS, *University of California, Los Angeles*)

*La Poésie lyrique espagnole et portugaise à la fin du Moyen Age. Vol. II: Les Formes.* Par Pierre Le Gentil. Rennes: Plichon, 1953. Pp. 505. This work is a sequel to a volume on themes and genres (see my review in *RR*, XLII [1951], 284-87). Although copyrighted in 1952, it did not appear until 1953. Perhaps one of the most valuable features of this study is the attention paid to recent investigations by musicologists. The initial remarks of Chapter I, particularly those referring to the sequence, are most suggestive and subsequent developments from this liturgical form in Spain might be investigated further with profit. Unfortunately, musicologists such as Spanke and Gennrich differ considerably in their results.

Most of the lengthy *Livre I* (pp. 11-106) is devoted to what the author himself calls an "aride étude des strophes," and consists primarily of a catalogue of rhymes.

Le Gentil feels that "L'influence de la France du Nord domine et s'exerce très fortement, alors qu'on abandonne délibérément les formes de l'ancienne lyrique galicienne" (pp. 105-06). While some French influence must have existed in Spain, the investigator's case would be stronger had he separated the tenuous from the concrete.

*Livre II* (pp. 111-60), which deals with various poetic artifices, is, surprisingly perhaps, the most suggestive of the whole work. Here the author's fine distinctions and citations from treatises of the Provençal poets and the Grands Rhétoriqueurs seem to be most fruitful, although it is difficult to see how Juan del Encina could reflect influences from both schools. One also wonders whether some devices do not reflect Humanistic Latin procedures. To compare a poem of several lines with alliteration such as "Forte, fiel, façanhoso, / fazendo feytos famosos," in honor of Ferdinand and Isabella with "François, faitiz, francz, fors, fermes au fait / Fins, frais, de fer, feroces, sans frayeour" by a Grand Rhétoriqueur is noteworthy, but the early sixteenth-century Spanish Humanist Alonso de Proaza has two Latin compositions of the type

Fungens tonantis munere  
Fidem doces catholicam,  
Funt fideles infidi  
Fas quinque mille quinquies.

(*Oratio luculenta de laudibus Valentie*, Valencia, Leonardo Hutz, 1505,  
fol. 1<sup>v</sup>.)

In *Livre III*, "La Poésie strophique libre," one finds the novel observation: "On peut [...] se demander si les poètes napolitains n'auraient pas imité, dans une certaine mesure, la lyrique des conquérants aragonais, et en particulier, si l'emploi du *strambotto* comme *desfecha*, ainsi que la *reprise en manière de refrain*, dans la *balatta*, ne seraient pas des hispanismes" (p. 178).

The author begins *Livre IV*, "Les Genres à forme fixe," with a discussion of the *Cantigas* of Alfonso el Sabio. Two schools of thought seem to be forming about the music of these compositions: a group, represented by Julián Ribera and Menéndez Pidal, favoring Arabic or autochthonous development and the one represented by Higinio Anglés stressing general European ties. This problem presents something of a dilemma for Le Gentil, because there seems to be no middle position, and his conclusions to this section (pp. 303-04) are somewhat attenuated a few pages later (p. 316).

The final *Livre V*, "Les Mètres," studies primarily the octosyllable and *arte mayor* with some consideration of the *seguidilla*, *endecha*, and verses of six and nine syllables. With the octosyllable Le Gentil almost immediately runs into serious difficulty. Using the commentaries of Nebrja and Juan del Encina to establish the supposed meter of this verse, he finds that eight lines of thirty-six octosyllables of Juan Ruiz' *Ave María* are too short and do not fit; then he proposes that certain slight modifications will make them fit properly (p. 327).

It should be borne in mind that the verses read well just as they stand; furthermore, if one applied this technique to a quantity of octosyllabic verse altering more than twenty per cent of the lines, the problem would be overwhelming. The basic rhythmic structure of the octosyllable has been greatly clarified in the last few years, as one notes in Tomás Navarro's *Métrica española* (Syracuse, 1956). According to Professor Navarro's system there are four basic metric types of octosyllabic

verse with very few exceptions, regardless of variants in the number of syllables per line. One fails to find the important work of Andrés Bello listed in Le Gentil's bibliography; this nineteenth-century writer broadened Nebrja's rudimentary concepts of versification, and, had Le Gentil known this work, he might have avoided certain pitfalls.

The chapter on the *arte mayor* is on a much sounder basis with the generally accepted metrical system of Foulché-Delbosc. However, in spite of the fact that the attempts of Morel Fatio and Baist to see a form analogous to the French *décasyllabe* were so strenuously combatted by Foulché-Delbosc and Hanssen respectively, the author at one point states: "[. . .] il faudra bien, à une étape quelconque de la discussion, admettre qu'on s'est servi, pour élaborer le grand vers du xv<sup>e</sup> siècle, à la fois du 'décasyllabe' et de l'*hexasyllabe* et non pas de l'un à l'exclusion de l'autre. Telle est, bien réduite à l'essentiel, notre 'thèse'" (pp. 437-38).

"Conclusions générales," subtitled "Valeur et originalité de la poésie hispanique du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle," a list of errors of Vol. I, additional notes and corrections to Vol. I, additional notes to Vol. II and an "Index sommaire" of names conclude the book. As may be seen from the foregoing remarks and quotations, the study is one of unequal merit. Le Gentil possessed the material, insight, and affection for his subject to have produced, with a somewhat different orientation, a work of capital importance. As it stands, the book contains much of value, but it has to be dug out by a wary reader. (D. W. MCPHEETERS, *Syracuse University*)

*Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*. By Ruth Kelso. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956. Pp. xi + 475. After the author's *Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (1929) she felt that the project would not be complete until she had explored all the literature intended for instruction of members of the privileged classes. Professor Kelso has now filled that gap with a large and well-documented volume which has its foundation on nearly nine hundred treatises—chiefly from Italy, France, Spain, and England—aimed at the training of the lady of the Renaissance. These writings date, roughly, from 1400 to 1600; they are supported by a supplementary list of four hundred and seventy-three documents from around the same period destined to help in the formation of the gentleman of the Renaissance. The combined bibliography of books relating to the perfecting of both ladies and gentlemen makes up almost one third of the *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, and is a remarkable compilation. On the other hand, there is a lack of reference to any secondary sources, nor has the author made use of any historical material—memoirs, letters, diaries, and the like—and the picture she paints is less vivid because of it. Professor Kelso makes it absolutely clear, however, that she has confined herself to theoretical treatises, and within this prescribed framework she has done a very thorough job.

The main body of the *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* is divided into some eight chapters of varying length. They are concerned with woman in the scheme of things, her training, her studies, her vocation, concepts of love and beauty, and the lady at court. The longest chapter in the book, "Love and Beauty," shows how complex and conflicting the opinions of the authorities on such matters can be. Professor Kelso admits very early that the treatises seldom make any well-cut distinctions between a woman and a lady—nor do many of them admit that the lady of the Renaissance might have any existence apart from the gentleman of the

Renaissance. The emphasis was placed overwhelmingly, whatever was woman's rank in society and whether she lived in England or on the Continent, on "the good wife within the walls of her house." The term "lady" was always vaguer than "gentleman" and never had the same seriousness of import, in spite of the wealth of written material intended for her guidance. Only one occupation was strongly recommended—housewifery.

Since most of the treatises on the subject of woman were written by men, she comes in for considerable criticism. Professor Kelso suggests that as far back as there is any record vituperation of woman has been "a manly sport." All of which led Christine de Pisan in 1404 in her *Livre de la cité des dames*—one of the frequently quoted authorities in this book—to defend her sex strongly against masculine attacks. Professor Kelso allows both the attackers and defenders of woman to speak their minds in very nice balance. The quality most admired in woman was chastity, closely followed by modesty, humility, constancy, and temperance. It is well brought out that the ideal set up for the lady was essentially Christian in character, while that of the gentleman was essentially pagan.

As for the lady's intellectual training, the authorities did not think it should be deep, nor should it take her away from her primary duties of running a house. Luis Vives, in his *De institutione feminae christiana*, which had some forty editions or translations before 1600, felt that a woman might learn about Christian history but certainly should not read romances treating of war and love. A defense of woman's privilege to acquire learning came, as might be expected, from across the Channel in the writings of Marguerite de Navarre and Madeleine des Roches. But woman's primary vocation was to please her husband and be something like a junior partner in his operations. Her honor must therefore be unquestioned, and she should never make a spectacle of herself by talking too much—the perfect wife, indeed, need not talk at all.

The lady in love is discussed by most of Professor Kelso's authorities who proceed from Plato through Castiglione. The lady may find love with her husband, but love and marriage do not necessarily go together. Many of these writers maintain that the lady may accept love outside marriage—since love is a natural, true law—if the relationship is handled discreetly. All authorities sought to define feminine beauty—woman's beauty of soul and beauty of body. In general, it was thought that a wife needed less to be beautiful than a mistress, and did not need to wear such fine clothes as the mistress.

The lady at court was pretty well covered in *Il Cortegiano*. Additional advice with regard to the behavior of a lady at court was to be found in Christine de Pisan, Anne de Beaujeu, and in Annibal Guasco's advice to his daughter, Lavinia. Among other things, a lady in the atmosphere of royalty should be careful of her speech, her dress, and should avoid too many friendships with men. If her honor is besmirched it will reflect on the regal mistress she is serving. This chapter on the lady at court comes nearest to making a distinction between the lady as a member of a privileged class and her feminine counterpart in a lower class of society. The lady still does not add up to the "single, commanding figure" that the various treatises made of the gentleman.

Professor Kelso's book, since it is made up primarily of quotations and summarizations, inevitably contains many repetitions of ideas and phrases. The author manages, nevertheless, to insert a few comments of her own. She rather scorchingly

points out in her conclusion that the estimate of woman—in essence, *man's* estimate—today is “at best little ahead of the most enlightened opinion of the Renaissance.” (W. L. WILEY, *University of North Carolina*)

*La Poésie religieuse de Clément Marot.* Par P. Leblanc. Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1956. Pp. xx + 391. Within the limitations imposed by the plan of her work, and by the relatively retarded state of Marot studies in general, Mlle Leblanc has given us a thorough and readable analysis of Marot's religious poetry. In evaluating her volume, however, we must not lose sight of these limitations. The Guiffrey edition which she follows is a highly unsatisfactory and unreliable basic text. The essential facts of Marot's literary and personal biography have not been definitively established. Professor C. A. Mayer's recent bibliographical studies have done much to advance Marot studies, and his edition of the poet's work is awaited with eagerness. But the fact is that, in the absence of basic historical and textual studies, Mlle Leblanc could only give us a study of the type which was devoted to the major figures of the French Renaissance half a century ago.

But the author is quite aware of these limitations and deserves to be judged on the basis of what she has accomplished rather than on the basis of what she has not attempted to do. She makes no effort to solve questions of doubtful attribution, except in a few cases, and this is probably to be regretted. She makes no effort to examine the evolution of Marot's text, and this is certainly regrettable. She confines herself almost exclusively to Marot's poetry, as produced in the Guiffrey edition, and does not attempt an examination of manuscripts or of other documentary evidence which is available. She has followed a definition of “religious poetry” which is very inclusive and has, in fact, covered even the remotest religious element in all his poetic work, regardless of the genre. This results at times in an impression that she is exaggerating the religious element in his work.

In reviews of recent volumes on Ronsard and Montaigne I have called attention to the highly gratifying evolution of French Renaissance studies during the past half century, and to the maturity of present-day studies. In the cases of Rabelais, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Montaigne, solid foundations for future work were created by the historical and textual studies of men like Lefranc, Laumonier, Chamard, Villey, Strowski, and a host of others, so that scholars of the present generation have a sound text and sound documentary evidence upon which to build. Today's student of Marot is not so fortunate and it would be unfair, of course, to reproach Mlle Leblanc for not giving us a definitive study of Marot's religious poetry at this time, in view of the lack of basic tools. She has given us a readable book, which presents a clear and living picture of Marot's relations with the personalities and the religious movements of his times, but which can not be accepted as definitive because of its failure to deal with a basic text and the fundamental documents concerning his life. (SAMUEL F. WILL, *Indiana University*)

*Littérature espagnole européenne.* Par Georges Cirot et Michel Darbord. Paris: Armand Colin, 1956. Pp. 213. The “Collection Armand Colin,” which has already published an *Histoire des lettres hispano-américaines* by Ch. V. Aubrun, brings out now this short history of the literature of Spain. It deals with Castilian letters from their origin to the present day and makes no attempt to discuss the other Romance and Semitic literatures that flourished in the Peninsula. Unlike most recent manuals

on the same subject written in languages other than Spanish—such as *The Literature of the Spanish People* by Gerald Brenan and the *Storia della letteratura spagnola* by José M. Valverde—this small manual will be of more use as a working tool for beginning hispanists than as a means of popularizing the culture of Spain.

Some facts pertaining to the composition of the book should be taken into consideration. It is to a large extent the work of the late Georges Cirot who left the manuscript unfinished. This text was then revised and abridged by Michel Darbord who also wrote the entire chapter on contemporary literature. M. Darbord was obliged to shorten the part written by Cirot, and, since the organization of the book had not been discussed between them, he felt bound to keep the original plan intact, while reducing the text. These circumstances account to a large extent for the erudite compactness of this little manual, which devotes relatively more space to facts than to their interpretation. Given the size of the book, it was perhaps necessary to choose between a schematic presentation of all significant material and a more illuminating study of a few essentials. It would be unfair to blame the authors for having made the first choice, since a pocket-sized book of reference may be very profitably used by students to place secondary authors adequately and to supplement the instructor's discussion of highlights, as well as their own readings.

A word should be said about the organization of the manual. It has three major divisions: "Le Moyen Age," "La Renaissance et le Siècle d'Or," and "Les XVIII\*, XIX\*, et XX\* siècles." Like Ernest Mérimée, but unlike most other historians of Spanish literature, M. Cirot includes in the section devoted to the Renaissance and Golden Age all fifteenth-century authors, except some early prose writers. This might not have affected substantially the structure of the book, if, as is the case in most manuals, the period had been broken down into separate chronological units. Cirot, however, studies in a continuous sequence the development of each literary genre throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and therefore the order in which he presents his material differs considerably from the usual pattern. His arrangement has some advantages. It is desirable, for instance, to pursue without interruption the development of lyric poetry, from the *Cancionero de Baena* to Gongorism and conceptism. But the system is not without drawbacks. The reader can hardly gain an understanding of a major author when, often, the discussion of one important aspect of his work is isolated from all others, because it is imbedded in a study of the genre. Lope de Vega and Quevedo suffer most from this treatment. Still more disturbing is the fact that we go through a survey of Renaissance and baroque prose, including the different types of fiction that flourished during the Golden Age, without previous discussion of *La Celestina*. This work is included in the last section, which deals with the theater, and even here it follows the *autos sacramentales*, for secular drama is studied after religious plays. We believe that this defeats the very purpose of the subdivision by genres, since, if *La Celestina* is removed from its crucial position, it becomes impossible to account adequately for later literary developments, with the doubtful exception of lyric poetry. In connection with the *tragicomedia* a slip of the pen has passed unnoticed: Agustín, instead of Fernando de Rojas is mentioned as the author.

Our objection to the organization of the manual refers only to the second part. Cirot's exposition of medieval literature is excellent, and here the subdivision by genres and types is the accepted practice and raises no major problems. Given the erudite character of the book, it would have been fitting, however, to introduce a

reference to the *jarchas mozárabes*—unknown at the time of Cirot's death—which have already found their way into books aimed at a wider public, such as the histories of Spanish literature by Brenan and Valverde and the *Antología general de la literatura española* by Amelia and Angel del Río.

In the third part of the manual, the subdivision by genres is abandoned and each century is studied separately. In spite of the difficulty involved in systematizing recent literary developments, M. Darbord succeeds in presenting a clear and adequate picture of Spanish letters in this century and should be given credit for bringing his account completely up to date. (MA. SOLEDAD CARRASCO URGOITI, College of the City of New York)

*French Lyric Poetry in the Age of Malherbe*. By Renée Winegarten. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954. Pp. xiv + 156. As its jacket indicates—better than its title—this book deals with "the fortunes of lyric poetry in France during the seventeenth century." The author's chief question: what happened to poetic practice and literary taste between the Pléiade and La Fontaine? This study centers on Malherbe, the first to modify significantly the tradition of Ronsard. Not that he destroyed that tradition; on the contrary, he derived from it: "Malherbe's poetry is a selection of Ronsard's, pruned of its luxuriant overgrowths" (p. 1). He seconded the Pléiade's rejection of medieval forms, its scorn for Marot, and continued its efforts to naturalize a serious lyric in France. If this aspect of Malherbe has been neglected it is because he himself cultivated that vein in which Ronsard had been least successful and least at ease: official court poetry and the noble ode. Most important, however, Malherbe urged to its logical limit the ancient alliance of the lyric with music which the Pléiade had revived. "It is not generally known," Miss Winegarten observes, "that many (at least twenty-one) of Malherbe's lyrics were composed to fit a set air, or were given a musical setting afterwards" (p. 3). His rules, then—strophic structure, alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, the end-stopped line, rich rhyme, regular cesura—"were formulated not out of a mere love of austerity for its own sake, but for musical considerations closely bound up with the requirements of the *air de cour*" (p. 5). Malherbe's interest in form was esthetically motivated.

Miss Winegarten makes one think twice about Sainte-Beuve's and Bainville's charge that Malherbe destroyed lyric poetry in France. She accounts convincingly for the apparent lack of feeling in Malherbe's verse by noting that he wrote in a Stoic convention. Himself a vulgarizer of Seneca and friend of the Stoic philosopher, Du Vair, Malherbe "was a passionate man, who tended to express in his poetry, not his passion, so much as that ideal of Stoic passivity for which he strove" (p. 3). The passionate element in Malherbe is usually overlooked, and yet it is to his intense, forceful personality that his doctrines were to owe their fortunes. It was not the originality of his theories—many of them were implicit in the corrections Ronsard made in his later years—but the vigor and energy with which he pushed them that impressed younger poets.

The author brings out clearly that in the contemporary imagination Malherbe figured as a "modern," a pioneer, a revolutionary, a far cry from the reactionary grammarian the romantics made of him. She stresses too that although the Malherbian perspective triumphed early it was never at any time fully accepted. But Théophile, Saint-Amant and Tristan, the so-called *irréguliers*, were not the only

ones to resist Malherbe. Racan, Godeau and Chapelain criticized him freely; the young Corneille flouted his authority and favored the *style ronsardisant* of Hardy. Nor was Boileau unaware of Malherbe's limitations. That Voiture and La Fontaine were able to admire him underscores that in his own century his fortunes were both extensive and varied.

Lyric efforts after Malherbe are considered under two heads: *la poésie galante* and *la poésie sérieuse*. In the latter category Miss Winegarten situates post-Malherbian developments in the ode. She takes *la poésie galante* in the seventeenth-century sense of "society poetry, including, but not necessarily, poetry dealing with love" (p. 48). The rise of this kind of verse marked a swing in taste away from Malherbe: the vogue of Marot (reprinted in anthologies four times as often as Malherbe); *vers irréguliers* replacing the *stances*; the revival by Voiture's circle of medieval forms. This development ends with an important observation: *la poésie galante* was no "brief manifestation which concerned [...] a number of insignificant and affected rhymsters" (p. 102). It ran the gamut of the century and culminated in the art of La Fontaine.

Miss Winegarten's descriptions and analyses of trends in the fortunes of the lyric are complete and often acute. Less satisfactory are her explanations of the historical causes for the emergence or waning of these trends. Why did non-serious poetry abound from the 1630's onwards? Several reasons are advanced: renewed social life after the civil wars, the decline of the heroic ideal, of Stoicism and Senecan influence, the rise of Epicureanism (pp. 57, 59-60). But only the first of these causes—mentioned all too briefly—will account for the special accent of *la poésie galante*, the insistence on naturalness and delicacy, its peculiar cast of eroticism. At this point in French culture social life took a particular direction. It was hardly the presence or absence of Seneca or Epicurus that conditioned the *salon* mentality, but, as Mornet has shown, a far-reaching feminism. This was above all an age that prized manners over morals, wit over learning, and valued delicately veiled obscenities that would titillate without offending. The author is only partly right to call *la poésie galante* "the poetry of the *honnête homme*" (p. 48), for it was geared primarily to the taste and sensibility of the *honnête femme*.

The fortunes of *la poésie sérieuse* were essentially those of the Ronsardian ode, stripped by Malherbe of its deliberate Pindaric obscurity, its excessive erudition, and restricted in form to ten-line strophes of lines of equal length with alternating rhymes. Malherbe had retained this structure and these devices because "he recognized a musical foundation as inseparable from the lyricism of the ode" (p. 107). Though still often used to celebrate public solemnities the post-Malherbian ode soon lost its heroic content. Little remained "save the form and the formulae" and by mid-century "any poem could be called an ode provided it was written in ten-line strophes" (p. 109). Miss Winegarten sees two causes for the ode's decline: the divorce of poetry and music after Malherbe and the failure of pagan mythology. But these, she continues, were only aspects of a broader movement "towards rationalism and a 'scientific' outlook." There was needed "a new myth which would give fresh meaning and life to poetry" (p. 112). But this seems all too pat to be true. One wonders, to begin with, whether pagan mythology was ever a determining factor even with Ronsard. As for the post-Malherbian divorce between music and poetry, this is often asserted by the author but never documented. There are recent

indications that the two arts remained wedded until late in the century.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, it is hard to understand why a growing "rationalism" should have squelched the serious ode while sparing *la poésie galante*.

A few final quibbles: p. 94: it is not certain that La Fontaine wrote the "Préface" to the *Recueil de poésies chrétiennes et diverses* (see Ferdinand Gohin, *La Fontaine: Etudes et recherches* [Paris, n.d.], pp. 167-85); p. 133: Boileau (whom the author insists on calling Despréaux) wanted not to "re-introduce Pindaric enthusiasm into the ode," but, as he explains in the *Discours sur l'ode* (1693), to provide a French example of a Pindaric ode for those who could not read Greek. Miss Winegarten's bibliography should have included E. B. O. Borgerhoff's *The Freedom of French Classicism* (Princeton, 1950). (J. B.)

*L'Angleterre dans l'œuvre de Madame de Staél.* Par Robert Escarpit. (Etudes de Littérature Etrangère et Comparée, no. 26). Paris: Marcel Didier, 1954. Pp. 176. Madame de Staél rêvait, bien des indices concourent à le prouver, d'un ouvrage sur l'Angleterre qui eût fait pendant au livre *De l'Allemagne*. Quelques linéaments de ce projet se découvrent dans ses *Considérations posthumes sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française*, où elle prône les idées de son père, donc l'imitation de la constitution et des mœurs politiques anglaises. Il n'est pas surprenant, par conséquent, que M. Escarpit doive aux *Considérations* la moitié ou presque des matériaux dont il s'est servi; que son travail consiste même, sous nombre de rapports, à déblayer le terrain pour une édition critique de cet important manifeste. Néanmoins, comme il l'observe judicieusement, rien ne garantit que la dernière œuvre de Madame de Staél soit, à toutes fins pratiques, le résidu de son hypothétique "De l'Angleterre"; c'en serait bien plutôt la préface ou l'embryon. Au surplus, nous rendrions maigre justice à M. Escarpit si nous limitions l'intérêt de son étude à une exégèse partielle des *Considérations*. Elle est cela et elle est bien autre chose. Elle s'étend à tous les textes de Madame de Staél, elle relève toutes ses allusions à la Grande-Bretagne, explicites ou tacites à la rigueur, et dégage très finement ce trait significatif parmi d'autres que, lorsque la fille de Necker décrit l'Allemagne, c'est, dans la plupart des cas, "par référence à l'Angleterre et par comparaison avec elle".

A vrai dire, si le tempérament de la dame de Coppet avait été celui d'un témoin ordinaire et d'un *reporter* impartial—ainsi que, de nos jours, nous aimeraissons imaginer les *reporters*—nous aurions motif de lui prêter tout autre créance sur le chapitre des Anglais que sur celui des Allemands. Elle a vécu outre-Manche, elle n'a fait que passer outre-Rhin. Elle a des Anglais une connaissance directe, admirative encore que dépourvue d'affection, et, fort versée qu'elle est dans l'histoire de leurs institutions d'abord, de leurs us et coutumes, de leur littérature jusqu'à un certain point, elle possède les éléments voulus pour en donner une image authentique. Mais non: pour des raisons différentes, la fresque britannique de Madame de Staél n'est pas plus digne de foi que son tableau de l'Allemagne. Celui-ci procède "d'une documentation schématique et orientée d'avance par quelques idées directrices fortes et simples"—trop fortes et trop simples, dirions-nous. Celle-là, beaucoup plus complexe, beaucoup plus personnelle, subit l'action déformante des préjugés de

1. See Lila Maurice-Amour, "Les Musiciens de Corneille: 1650-1699," *Revue de Musicologie*, XXXVII (1955), 43-75.

œur et d'esprit que la redoutable dialecticienne apporte au débarqué. Madame de Staël, sur le sol anglais, cherche ce qu'elle a résolu d'y trouver. Elle le trouve de temps en temps, cela va de soi, et nous y gagnons, ici et là, tels ou tels aperçus solides et constructifs. Le plus souvent, toutefois, elle croit trouver ce qui n'existe pas et ne trouve pas ce qui existe, organisant ses sympathies et antipathies en fonction de ces étranges démarches. *A priori* encore et toujours. Décidément, elle aura ouvert la voie à cette lignée de voyageurs qui, de Taine à Duhamel, en passant par Paul Bourget, s'en vont à l'étranger "contrôler" des notions préconçues. Avec cela, la force de sa personnalité est si irrésistible, que le siècle la suit docilement dans les sentiers où elle veut l'entraîner. C'est par ses yeux et ses ceillères que, pendant plus de cinquante ans, les générations romantiques verront le paysage intellectuel et sentimental de l'Allemagne. Plus diffuse dans son œuvre, et, partant, dans les effets qu'elle pouvait avoir, sa conception de l'Angleterre ne s'en est pas moins transmise aux Doctrinaires, puis, grâce à eux, aux révolutionnaires de 1830. La Monarchie de Juillet consacre le triomphe des idées staëliennes, viables mais aléatoires, à la mesure de leur vérité.

M. Escarpit est un guide sûr. Fidèle à son titre, il ne prétend aucunement faire la grande synthèse, sur "Madame de Staël et l'Angleterre", qu'il faudra bien écrire un jour, un jour lointain sans doute, quand auront été vidées et dépouillées les archives du château de Broglie. En revanche, et dans les limites qu'il se trace, l'ouvrage est un ouvrage complet, d'autant plus substantiel qu'y règne une science remarquable de l'expression nette, succincte et sans bavures. Dommage qu'il me faille autant d'adjectifs pour laisser entendre que M. Escarpit sait dire beaucoup de choses en peu de mots! Mais dommage aussi qu'il torde le cou à l'éloquence au point d'insérer au milieu du volume, entre un développement en forme qui est la première partie et un autre développement en forme qui est la troisième partie, le long index alphabétique (pp. 55-111) des allusions à l'Angleterre dans les livres de Madame de Staël. Je ne connais, pour ma part, aucun précédent à cet arrangement qui me choque tant soit peu, fût-ce dans une monographie savante et sans prétentions à passer pour une œuvre d'art. Il ne sert, que je sache, aucun propos utile, et l'index en question remplirait son office, tout aussi bien, peut-être mieux, à la place traditionnelle des index. Mais, à supposer que ce soit là un péché, c'est péché vénial, bien entendu. (J.-A. B.)

*Pour et contre Maupassant: Enquête internationale, 147 témoignages inédits.* Par Artine Artinian. Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1955. Pp. 145. This is a singularly interesting collection of opinions on Maupassant gathered by Professor Artinian from a random sampling of contemporary men of letters. The subtitle does something less than justice to Professor Artinian's own earlier effort in this domain, his *Maupassant Criticism in France, 1880-1940* (New York, 1941), which included in an appendix 107 replies which are repeated in his new work. *Pour et contre Maupassant* thus contains 40 new items, all gathered after 1950.

Such a collection of opinions, ranging from George Ade to Stefan Zweig, and including writers of many nationalities and tendencies, naturally invites generalizations. In a brief but dense introduction Professor Artinian has done a good deal of the work for us, pointing out certain well-established points of agreement in the midst of a truly astonishing range of opinion. There is, for example, general agreement as to the excellence of Maupassant's prose style, and almost all accept him

as a master of the short story form, whatever other reservations they may have about the author. Among his stories, those with a Norman setting were generally preferred. Although there are many touching tributes to Maupassant's influence, there are nevertheless a large number of brickbats among the bouquets, from Claudel's abrupt declaration in 1950: "Je ne prends aucune espèce d'intérêt à Guy de Maupassant," to complaints about the lack of poetic quality in Maupassant's work, and the inevitable comparisons with Chekhov. Finally, after a few useful pages on Maupassant's influence and reputation in the United States, the editor of the collection points up the diversity of the opinions submitted by arranging side by side pairs of absolutely contradictory statements. The least accurate remark in the whole book is surely that of Vincent Sheean, who stated: "I think you will find very little range of opinion about Guy de Maupassant or his work."

What emerged most strikingly for this reader is the fact that Maupassant has clearly had his greatest impact on young men, on writers in the very early years of their careers. He did not, of course, make an impression on all of them, and those who were affected by him frequently moved far away from his techniques as time went on, but it is clear from this collection that almost all of these writers are looking back critically or gratefully, but in any case somewhat dimly, to a more or less distant past in which Maupassant was an active force. Frequently the circumstances of that early reading are as important as the stories themselves, whether it is Somerset Maugham stealthily slitting pages in a bookstore or Serge Groussard discovering *Fort comme la mort* in a dozen dusty numbers of *Lectures* in the attic of his parents' house "aux bords de la Sèvre niortaise, au cœur du Poitou." The most significant testimony, however, comes from those who have gone back to re-read Maupassant seriously and critically, like Sean O'Faolain, who "was surprised by a number of things [he] had not yet held in [his] memory of him." Mr. O'Faolain then went on to develop these ideas more fully in his excellent book *The Short Story* (London: Collins, 1948, pp. 101-31).

*Pour et contre Maupassant* provides us with a useful rough plot of Maupassant's present literary position: not remote enough to be a classic, yet clearly a writer of the past. His position is affected by the general reaction against naturalism, and he has not yet settled into a proper perspective, obscured somewhere in the middle distance. A proper reevaluation of Maupassant's art will occur only when his work is read and re-read seriously on its own merits, that is, when it is no longer involved in a general condemnation of naturalism or blurred by the haze of nostalgia. (EDWARD D. SULLIVAN, Princeton University)

*Charles Cros.* Par Jacques Brenner et Ian Lockerbie. (Poètes d'aujourd'hui, no. 47). Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1955. Pp. 220. In his own day Charles Cros was known by many but appreciated meagerly; today he is known by the few but valued highly by his admirers. In his introduction to the present volume, Jacques Brenner, who also wrote the preface to the complete works (Club Français du Livre, 1954), joins Cros' earlier admirers in pointing out the flagrant irony of his failure to attain recognition. An inventor in the field of science, an innovator in literature, a familiar figure in the literary salons, and a well-known *diseur* in the more frequented cabarets, he should have been one of the most famous men of his time. Instead, he died in poverty and oblivion, remembered merely as the author of an ingenuous triviality, "Le Hareng saur," while Thomas Edison was acclaimed in his place as the

inventor of the phonograph, and Verlaine and Rimbaud divided between themselves the credit for having freed French poetic language of its monotonous eloquence.

It remained for the Surrealists to retrieve him—as in the case of Lautréamont, Saint-Pol-Roux and Germain Nouveau—and, by claiming him as a literary ancestor, to recognize him as a revitalizing force in French poetry. The qualities attributed to Charles Cros in the 1920's are reiterated and emphasized in the present volume. The greatest compliment of the modern critic to the nineteenth-century Cros is to identify him with the twentieth-century spirit: his wry humor, "une conception poétique de l'absurde tel quel' exprime l'esprit moderne," according to Ian Lockerbie in his critical appraisal, Cros' discernment of the sublime within the ordinary appearances of life, his disdain for so-called poetic language, a preference for the humble and often coarse idiom of common speech, his use of elliptic imagery, replete with meaningful yet mystifying verbal associations. Aside from his poetic prowess, the moderns admire the integrated character of Cros' mind, receptive to both science and the arts. They applaud above all perhaps the independent attitude which he displayed in the midst of literary coteries, remaining untainted by any of them as he wandered from Parnassian salon to Symbolist cénacle.

Allusions to his personal relationships with Verlaine and Villiers, to his role in launching Rimbaud's literary career, indicate tempting possibilities for future study. But whether this particular presentation or more elaborate studies to come will establish Charles Cros as a major poet remains doubtful to this reader. True, the claims, summed up above, are all valid. The literary influence of his poems must also be taken seriously. One is inclined to agree with André Breton that the tone and even the particular character of the imagery found in Rimbaud's *Illuminations* can already be detected in Cros' "Sur Trois Aquatintes de Henry Cros"; and it would seem that he succeeded more often than Verlaine in reducing the love-poem to the casual language of conversation. It may well be, as Jacques Brenner believes, that Laforgue remembered Cros while writing his bitter-sweet *Complaintes* with its theme of anguished solitude, that Germain Nouveau's *Notes parisiennes* had more than a coincidental affinity with Cros' *Fantaisies en prose*, or that Jarry's *Surmâle* derived from Cros' science of love. It may even be asked if Cros' absurd M. Igitur with his aspirations for the moon had some remote connection with his Mallarmean namesake. One also remembers that, in his *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, André Breton hails Cros as a genius and his intellectual capacities as prodigious.

And yet, Cros' actual achievements seem to fall short of these enthusiastic claims. The very diversity of his talents appear to have prevented him from sustaining any one manner long enough to create a unity of style or vision.

The choice of verse and prose poetry included in this volume is a fair one, exemplifying the multiple facets of the poet; one misses, however, the little poem, "Avenir," from *Le Coffret de Santal*, which is one of the best samples of Cros' modernism and could easily pass for a surrealist piece. It is too bad that the editors do not indicate here—as is done in many of the previous volumes—the dates of the poems selected, or at least the names of the collections from which they derive; an unfortunate omission since the majority of his readers are familiar neither with the sequence nor the groupings of Cros' works.

In attempting to do full credit to Cros' long neglected merits, Jacques Brenner's article fortunately does not fall into the nostalgic, sentimental manner often found in studies of this nature. The tone is objective even if the judgment is a bit too

generous. The second article, by Ian Lockerbie, which stresses the tragedy of Cros the man, seeking recognition, and his frustrations as a physicist, chemist, philosopher and poet, conveys more of the attitude of an apologist. But it succeeds in placing the poet within his epoch, and the critic's sympathy brings into sharper focus the misery of the poet, his solitude, and futile struggle for a morsel of glory. (ANNA BALAKIAN, *New York University*)

*Marcel Proust et Jacques Rivière: Correspondance (1914-1922)*. Présentée et annotée par Philip Kolb. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1955. Pp. 324. This latest volume of Proust correspondence is a but partially disguised segment of a scholarly edifice already more than twenty years in the making and still far from complete. Although Professor Kolb was able to slip a few correct dates into the *Lettres à Mme et M. Émile Straus* before the war, it is only in the last two or three years that he has been entrusted with the important task of publishing Proust's correspondence in an orderly manner. It is to be hoped that eventually some publisher and all the heirs and heiresses who inevitably get involved in the publication of contemporary literary documents will be prevailed upon to authorize him to combine the hitherto chaotically published correspondence with his own monumental *Correspondance de Marcel Proust: Chronologie et commentaire critique*.

In the preface to *Correspondance avec sa mère*, Professor Kolb disavowed any intention of producing a scholarly volume. In the Rivière volume, however, he finds it unnecessary to resort to such subterfuge to deceive the *honnêtes gens* who still read Proust. This new volume, like its predecessor, is very thoroughly annotated, albeit with a certain restraint, and, what is more interesting, the original text is faithfully reproduced. Because Mme Isabelle Rivière has found it necessary to polish up her husband's text, one might say that the Proust text suffers by contrast. But it is an honest and illuminating one, invaluable for anyone interested in Proust's style, and turns into a poignant document in the end when it becomes embroiled in the incredible orthography and syntax of Henri Rochat and Céleste Albaret, as Proust, immobilized by what was soon to be his final illness, resorts to the pen of these ignorant amanuenses.

It has been said, time and again, that Proust's correspondence is disappointing as a literary document in its own right. One is amazed, for example, that he could write so shoddily to his mother while he was composing *Jean Santeuil* and translating Ruskin, or that she could answer in such uninspired letters when she is known to literature as the great admirer of Madame de Sévigné. Yet, in another sense, Proust's correspondence is an extraordinary document because, instead of being a literary interlude as it is for many writers, it was his means of communication with the outside world. More and more, as the record becomes more complete, it is apparent that Proust's correspondence is a casual conversation and, as such, constitutes an unusual psychological document.

Hence it is necessary to wade through much that is superficial (and Professor Kolb has not spared us, since he has scrupulously printed every scrap of correspondence, even fragments of letters of which the remainder has been lost), until gradually a subtle understanding of Proust emerges. Through the details of Proust's asthma in the correspondence with his mother we come to understand what makes the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* such a phenomenal character, and, through the details of the business of publication in the correspondence with

Rivière, we understand how the nervous, pampered, and sickly young man of the other volume became the mature genius who triumphed over his illness to produce his masterpiece. The letter he wrote to Rivière after a remark by Allard had annoyed him is a masterpiece of blunder and ingratitude (Professor Kolb points out, in his most illuminating note, how incorrect Proust was in all his accusations), and yet the letter of apology to his friend is the most sincere thing he wrote. The correspondence convinces us that our scepticism was unwarranted and that Proust was a truly sick man. When he was himself, he was a different person, extraordinarily intelligent and compassionate with his friends.

The correspondence with Rivière is not just the record of an author-editor relationship replete with all kinds of technical details of interest only to a Proust specialist; it is the history of the friendship of two minds of exceptional quality who understood each other best, perhaps, because they were both housed in inferior bodies. Rivière was noted for his understanding of other people and for his ability to rouse them to literary activity. Continually we see him at work, encouraging Proust to write critical articles for the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. One is momentarily persuaded that it was fortunate that Rivière never succeeded in deflecting Proust from his main course, but, on second thought, it seems providential that he was there in those last critical years to bolster him by this unqualified admiration for his work and by this reassurance to Proust that he was understood, appreciated, and supported by the leading French literary review and publishing house. Not every great writer has been so fortunate. (DOUGLAS W. ALDEN, *Princeton University*)

*Une Mort ambiguë*. Par Robert Mallet. Paris: Gallimard, 1955. Pp. 222. "Si c'est de la critique", en a dit Robert Kemp dans les *Nouvelles Littéraires*, "c'est plus encore de la psychologie". Certes, critique aiguisée et révélatrice, perspicacité psychologique d'une extrême finesse, mais aussi témoignage d'une vivacité, d'une véracité qui font de ce livre un document essentiel pour la connaissance des grands "chefs de file" de notre temps—Gide, Claudel, Léautaud en premier lieu—dont l'influence spirituelle a marqué les lettres françaises; et en outre, profession de foi, credo moral et quasi politique d'un des jeunes auteurs les plus promettants.

Pour ceux qui connaissent ses frêles plaquettes de vers (nommons au moins en passant le petit recueil *Amour, mot de passe*, publié par Pierre Seghers), il était évident que Robert Mallet ne pouvait se contenter plus longtemps d'être le présentateur de correspondances—fussent-elles celles de Gide, de Claudel, de Jammes, de Suarès, de Valéry—ou l'agent provocateur de Léautaud à la radio. Sans doute, ses ainés avaient trouvé en lui un commentateur et un historiographe remarquable, avisé, scrupuleux, sensible et plein de tact. Mais ses préfaces et ses notes ne révèlent qu'un aspect de son intelligence. Ses enregistrements personnels et ses réflexions faites au cours des longues entrevues que ce travail nécessitait, il les réservait à son journal. Ce sont ces pages de journal qui forment en grande partie *Une Mort ambiguë*. Il s'y montre d'une étonnante habileté à susciter le débat, à arracher à ses interlocuteurs des déclarations qu'il n'entendaient peut-être pas faire. Mais ces déclarations trouvent un prolongement en lui. "Passionné par le drame qui se joue dans tout homme à la recherche de son équilibre religieux" et "obstiné à vouloir donner à [sa] vie un sens qui ne fût pas que celui de son cheminement charnel", Mallet élabora à travers le comportement, les enseignements et la mort des grands écrivains qu'il a connus une mise au point de sa propre pensée devant les problèmes spirituels et temporels de notre époque.

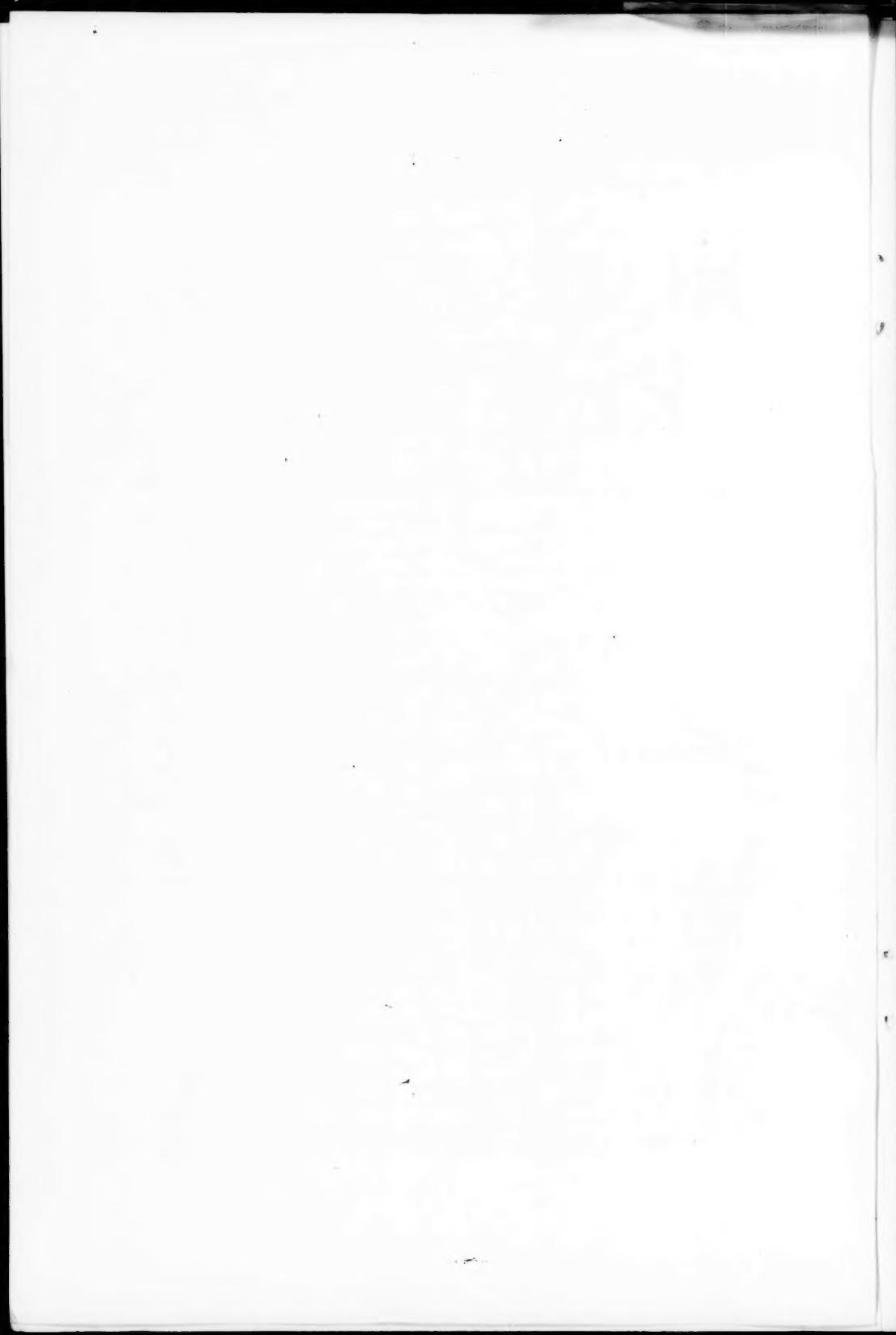
# THE ROMANIC REVIEW

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Le titre du livre se rapporte, bien entendu, à Gide. Mort ambiguë, vie ambiguë, message ambigu... Les dernières paroles de Gide—"C'est toujours la lutte entre ce qui est raisonnable et ce qui ne l'est pas"—semblent sceller cette ambiguïté, permettant à chacun, croyant ou incroyant, de les interpréter selon sa pente. L'absence de toute disposition au sujet de ses funérailles laisse à ses héritiers le soin délicat de décider de ses dernières volontés, ce qui entraîna une étrange contradiction: mort païenne à Paris, obsèques religieuses, selon le rite protestant, à Cuverville. A cette ambiguïté, Robert Mallet se refuse toutefois de donner un sens négatif. Bien au contraire. Face à la certitude opaque et têteue de Claudel, face au ricane-ment négateur et cynique de Léautaud, c'est vers le doute perméable et mobile de Gide, générateur de liberté, qu'il penche résolument.

Cependant ne convient-il pas ici de se demander si Mallet, en surévaluant les dernières paroles de Gide, n'insiste pas un peu trop sur cette ambiguïté? Pour être essentielles, suffit-il qu'elles fussent les dernières? Et la longue lutte de Gide pour se détacher de la foi, sans défaillance dans les ultimes années et véritablement couronnée d'un agnosticisme serein, n'est-elle pas autrement significative qu'une phrase obscure chuchotée au seuil de la mort?

L'ouvrage contient des portraits admirables des trois écrivains, des instantanés et des dialogues qui, mieux que des peintures méticuleuses, éclairent et pénètrent l'essentiel de leurs caractères et de leurs messages. Il comprend certaines descriptions, comme celle des funérailles normandes de Gide ou, plus loin, la visite de Léautaud, en compagnie de Mallet, au cimetière de Cuverville, qui sont d'une précision documentaire, d'une force d'évocation et d'une netteté d'écriture inoubliables. Il offre des aperçus hardis, serrés, de Valéry, de Mauriac, de Jouhandeu et d'autres. Parfois, au milieu de tout cela, on perçoit une note triste: la déception de l'auteur de n'avoir pas senti de la part de ses grands aînés un souci spirituel plus vif, un sentiment plus chaleureusement humain.

Témoignage capital, comme on voit, l'essai de Mallet est en dernière instance l'œuvre d'un moraliste sincère, profondément responsable, aspirant "à une vie qui trouve son unité". Désirant transmuer le "peut-être" de Gide en un *peut être* et proposant "l'idéal de progrès poussé à son point de perfection dans le secret de l'individu, non pas comme un pis-aller mais comme le seul moyen de satisfaire la soif d'absolu de l'homme au cours de son existence", l'auteur espère en une cité future où le *oui* de Claudel, le *non* de Léautaud et le *peut-être* de Gide puissent cohabiter: "La dictature est un monologue. Le dialogue y conduit. Seule la trilogie préserve partiellement la liberté d'expression". (RENÉE LANG, Paris)

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